LUCKY BOB

FRANCIS J. FINN, S.J.

LUCKY BOB

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LUCKY BOB

BY

FRANCIS J. FINN, S.J.

Author of "Percy Wynn," "Tom Playfair," "Harry Dee," etc.

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LUCKY BOB

CHAPTER I

Introducing an unkind father and an astounded son.

"GET down," said a harsh voice. "Oh, I say, pa, I can't see my hand in front of my face. It's as dark as pitch."

The youthful objector had good reason for his statements. Seated beside his father in an automobile, which coincidently with the going out of the headlight had come to a full stop, he was looking out into darkness unrelieved by moon or midnight star. In the light that had just gone out he had seen the road before them narrowing apparently to a cow-path with huge trees and thick undergrowth on either side. The occupants of the machine had been speeding for full two hours, starting from a strange village, the name and the situation of which the boy did not know. He was long accustomed to the darkness of a room; but in the open, far from familiar sights, his ears shocked

by the weird shriek of the owl and the cries of unknown birds of the night, it is no wonder that the lad became more than a trifle uneasy. He put his hand, as he ceased speaking, caressingly upon his father's shoulder.

With rude and unnatural violence the man caught the boy's arm and threw it off.

"Don't be a baby, Bob. Get out, I say."

As he spoke, the man seized the boy by the shoulders and almost threw him out. The boy stumbled as he touched the ground and fell.

"Ouch!" he cried, and slowly picked himself up.

"Now you needn't pretend you're hurt," cried the elder, harshly, as with stiff awkwardness he alighted from the machine. "I want no more baby acts."

"I don't have to pretend, pa; I've got a bruise on my knee, and it hurts like fun."

Suddenly a small circle of fairy light shot out, cutting into the palpable darkness. The circle moved about swiftly till it focussed upon a rather fat boy with a very rueful face, who was holding his right knee with one hand and rubbing it with the other. Also, it revealed the harsh features of the man himself, who was pointing the flashlight directly at the boy's head. He was tall, thin, long of face, with prominent nose, shaped so as to suggest some

bird of prey, and heavy, frowning eyebrows which emphasized his forbidding features. At the moment, his thin lips were tightly compressed, his forehead was deeply wrinkled, and his nostrils were quivering.

For a few seconds he thus stood like a figure in a tableau, while the chubby lad, suspending the operation of rubbing, but still holding his knee, gazed with growing trepidation upon the other's forbidding features.

"Oh, pa," he cried at length, dropping on his knee, "if it's all the same to you, put out that light. I'm getting more scared of you than I was of the darkness."

For answer the man tried to smile reassuringly. Seldom was an attempt at smiling a greater failure. His thin lips opened a little, revealing a few teeth that were uncannily white in the golden glow, his mouth widened, and his eyes seemed to be straining from their sockets. Bob meanwhile put his right fist under his chin, supporting the elbow with his left hand.

"What is the matter, pa?" cried the youth presently, his face paling with real terror. "Are you mad at me? You haven't spoken a dozen words since we took the train from Dubuque early this afternoon. What is it, pa? Please tell me."

The man leaned heavily against the side of

the machine; his face twitched; he looked as if he were about to have a paralytic stroke. Through the silence came the long sad "to-woo" of a distant owl. A sudden breeze arose and sent the leaves of the surrounding trees into a low, solemn lisping.

"I-I-I'm afraid," gasped Bob. The electric glow revealed drops of perspiration upon his brow.

"Listen, Bob," the man at length said. "Do you know how old you are?"

"I'll be fourteen on September fifth, just two months from to-day."

"When I was your age, I was obliged to shift for myself."

"How did you do it, pa?"

"And," continued the father, ignoring the question, "what I did I want you to do."

"Did your father throw you out, pa?"

"That's neither here nor there. The fact I want to get into your head is that before I was fourteen I was alone and supporting myself, and to-day I am worth over forty—." Here the man checked himself.

"The people in our neighborhood," said Bob, "say you're worth seventy thousand dollars, if you're worth a cent."

"Bother the people," cried the man peevishly, becoming in his irritation more easy of

utterance. "They don't know what they're talking about. I'm not worth near anything like what they think. Well, anyhow, what was good enough for me ought to be good enough for you. To-night I'm going to let you go and shift for yourself."

"Yes, pa; I think I can easily get a job in Dubuque."

"Not at all; you're not going back to Dubuque."

"I'm not?"

"Decidedly not."

"Well, where am I going?"

"Down the river. You can go to St. Louis, if you want; or for that matter to New Orleans; in any case, you're to go south and stay south."

"But aren't you coming with me?"

"Didn't I say you were to shift for yourself? You are to go your way and I mine."

"Well, can't I go back to Dubuque, and bid good-by to all my friends?"

"On no account," rasped the man. "If you dare show your face at Dubuque or near it, you'll go to jail and stay there."

"Go to jail! What have I done?"

"Never mind. I've got things so fixed that you'll be arrested if you're discovered."

Bob, bracing himself against a tree, caught

up his knee and began to rub it again, his eyes meantime looking in undisguised amazement at the elder.

"I suppose, then," he presently said, "that you'll see me off to some station."

"You'll suppose nothing of the sort. I've seen you off as far as I intend to already."

Bob dropped his knee and opened his eyes wider. Once more he fell into his favorite attitude; right hand under the chin, the elbow supported by his left.

"What?" he gasped.

"For heaven's sake take down your hand, and," continued the man with seemingly unnecessary fierceness, "you are to change your name."

"Change my name?"

"Yes, if you give out your true name, you are likely to be arrested anywhere."

"Well, suppose I am arrested, what's the difference? Bob Evans is my name, and Bob Evans is going to be my name as long as I live."

"What? What?" roared the man.

"Well, aren't you throwing me off?" protested the boy. "You have left me without home, or friends, or city or anything. You've even taken my religion from me. And now you want to take my name from me, too. It

seems to me that as soon as you get rid of me I've got a right to any name I want, or at least, to my own name."

"I have not taken your religion from you. It was a mistake that I ever let you know you were baptized a Catholic. If you mean to say I didn't let you be brought up a Catholic, it's because I didn't want you to be numbered with the scum of the earth and the offscourings of the American people."

"You needn't tell me that little Angela Clark, the lame girl, is the scum of the people," returned Bob with some show of spirit. "She is an angel. And there's little Johnny Smith, the blind boy. He's as good as gold. And there's old Mrs. Keller, the woman who's always sick and always cheerful—everybody loves her. And they are Catholics. And then—"

"That's enough," roared Mr. Evans. "You've spoken of three Catholics, one lame, another blind, and the third bedridden. Nice friends for a boy who's got to help himself! How can such trash help you?"

"I can help them, father; and I love them. And they have helped me a lot."

"Stuff! Forget them and your other friends, crippled dogs and abandoned cats and ragged children. Now, sir, I'm going to do

more for you than was done for me. I'm going to start you in life with fifty dollars." Saying which, Mr. Evans produced from his coat a sealed envelope. "Here, take it, and go. Now as to your name—"

"My name is Bob Evans," said the boy stoutly.

"You may keep the Bob, but you must drop the Evans."

"Honest, pa, I can't see it."

Mr. Evans, transferring his flashlight from his right to his left hand, suddenly whipped out a revolver, which he pressed against the boy's brow.

"Kneel down," he commanded.

The boy, gasping, fell upon his knees.

"I—I'm not ready to die," he cried. "Oh, what have I done?"

"Now listen," continued the man. "I want you to swear that you'll change your name, and that you'll not return to Dubuque, nor write to any one there, nor communicate in any other way for at least one year."

"I swear it," gasped poor Bob, promptly, "and I wish you'd put that pistol away. I don't like the feel of it."

"Very good," answered Mr. Evans, returning the revolver to his pocket. "Suppose you call yourself Bob Ryan."

"Sure, pa," assented the boy as he rose from his knees. "Bob Ryan—that's me. I never knew a Ryan that I did not like. It's an honest name."

"Now, boy, you may go."

"Pa, are you going to leave me here—all alone—without a friend?"

"Friends are cheap," returned the man, as he gave his attention to the automobile lamp. It flared out in a moment, throwing its strong light upon the tear-stained face of the wretched boy.

"Father, father!" cried Bob, in accents that would have wrung the heart of men accustomed to grappling with misery and distress, "are you going to leave me alone in the world?"

"Stuff! The world is full of friends only waiting to be picked."

"Well, aren't you going to bid me good-by?"

As Bob spoke, he leaped upon the running board of the automobile and stretched out his trembling hand to the harsh and pitiless occupant.

For a moment the man hesitated. A struggle seemed to be waging within him. Presently he reached out his hand; but just as it touched the boy's fingers, and just as Bob raised his streaming eyes, he shot out an oath

and roughly pushed the boy off the running-board.

There was a moment's silence, broken presently by the hoot of an owl; another silence, then a moan followed by a cry as of a broken heart. Bob Ryan had fallen senseless to the earth.

Evans' face grew wan; the sweat stood out upon his brow. He hesitated, then with another oath started the machine, leaving in the lone woods a lone boy, a sad boy, the lonest and saddest boy—happily unconscious—in the whole state of Iowa.

CHAPTER II

Introducing under rather extraordinary circumstances a Literary Tramp.

THE sunlight, glorious, golden, of early morn made a checkered and changing path through the trees. The path advanced westward to the sweet jargoning of early birds, while light and glittering dew and woodland fragrance played their parts towards ushering in with due state a perfect morning in early July. A tender breeze set the leaves into a sibilant accompaniment to the fine careless rapture of the feathered songsters. Light and shadow changed places with each other to the movement of the swaying branches. Presently the sun threw its gleams direct upon the face of a chubby-cheeked boy, who, with face to the sky, lay happily unconscious. Happily, I say, for there was a smile upon his face. The soul of the dawn had entered through the portals of dreamland into the sleeping lad's blood, and, without being aware of it, he was gay with the birds, gay with the light, gay, in

a word, with the wild freshness of early morning. Louder swelled the chorus of the birds, brighter shone the sunlight, more insistent grew the swish of leaves and branches. The smile on the sleeping lad's face expanded. Presently his mouth opened, revealing pearly teeth, and he began to laugh aloud. Even as he laughed he opened his eyes; and then suddenly all laughter ceased, though his mouth remained open.

The cause of this sudden change from gaiety to amazement was the sight of a strange-looking man sitting beside him and gazing at him with much solemnity.

The stranger was about twenty-five years old. He wore a straw hat with a very defective brim. A fine silk shirt, spotlessly clean and open at the throat, was in startling contrast to an old pair of blue jeans and a pair of shoes which were cracked, down at the heels, and almost without soles. The stranger's face was rubicund, browned with the sun, and, it must be confessed, somewhat bloated. A very ancient pipe with an overpowering flavor was in his mouth. A beard of several days' growth, while far from adding to the beauty of his features, failed to conceal a face which was at once good-humored and strikingly intellectual.

The man, noticing the wonder on Bob's features, removed his pipe.

"Do you always do that?" he inquired.

"Do what?" cried Bob, sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

"Wake up with a laugh that sends the echoes into sympathetic merriment?"

"Won't you please say that over, sir?" asked Bob, putting his fist under his chin, and supporting the elbow with his left hand.

"Which I wish to remark, and my language is plain, gentle Faun of Iowa, do you generally wake up gurgling, chortling, and goo-gooing?"

"I often wake up laughing, sir, if that's what you mean."

"Boy, I stand answered. If I had your directness of speech, if I knew how to call a spade a spade, and a philanthropist a butter-in, I'd be editor of some big magazine instead of being a tramp."

"Oh, are you a tramp, sir?"

"At your service, gentle Faun."

"You talk like a book."

"That's one of my least defects. But whence come you? Whither are you going? And are you waiting a company of Dryads?"

"I'm hungry," answered Bob.

"Lord, boy! How you do come to the

point! Hard by purls a gentle brook, singing its way to the Mississippi. The water is deliciously cool. Taken in moderation it is worth while. As for food, I have prepared you a banquet."

"What?"

"Sandwiches, compounded by the neat-handed Phyllis of a neighboring farm. I got four, ate two, and for their purchase parted gladly with me last ducat."

"Ducat?"

"You'd call it a ten-cent piece; but no matter. To return to our subject. I spied you sleeping here just about the time the sun was gilding the east with heavenly alchemy. I knew you'd wake; I surmised you'd be hungry. So I hied me to adjacent fields and gathered luscious strawberries sparkling with dew. Come, my son, arise and follow me."

Saying which, the self-styled tramp knocked the ashes out of his pipe, stuck it jauntily in his hat, and catching the hand of the wondering lad, led him trippingly through a space of woods, till they reached a gurgling steam, limpid and inviting.

"Sit you down here, O Faun of Iowa, and allow me to wait upon you."

Suiting the action to the command, the man swung Bob to a convenient log, hurried to the

water's edge, turned aside some leaves, and revealed to the hungry lad's gaze a package neatly done up in white paper and a tin plate piled high with strawberries, redder far than the boy's ruddy cheeks.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" cried Bob, biting into a sandwich. "Gee!" he added, "this tastes good."

"It's the kind of sandwich mother used to make," said the man gravely, "and you'd better eat slowly. There's only one more left. And at present I'm insolvent."

"Oh, I've got some money, all right, if that's what you're worrying about," said Bob; and reaching into the pocket of his knickerbockers, he produced the envelope, opened it, and discovered to his amazed host a roll of bills.

"O most noble Crœsus, your most humble and devoted servant," cried the man, doffing his hat and bowing profoundly.

"My name isn't Crœsus. It's Bob Ev—— Bob Ryan."

"If you had told me you were the son and heir of John D. Rockefeller, I'd have believed you, Bob Ryan. But may I ask, if it be not impertinent, how under the round earth a fat boy in knee-breeches happens to be sleeping like the Babes in the Wood with untold wealth upon his person?"

"This isn't untold wealth," corrected Bob as he addressed himself to the second sandwich. "It's fifty dollars. Four tens, one five, and five one-dollar bills. Here, look at 'em yourself."

"Correct to a penny," said the man, running his fingers deftly over the bills. "As I hold these in my hands," he continued pensively, "my mind reverts to the happy days when, carefree and in purple and fine linen, I engaged at jackstones with golden eagles for jacks, while gleaming fountains played, and peacocks with feathers full-set to all the winds that blow paraded proudly over swards green as the heart of the emerald."

"Where did all that happen, sir?"

"In my mind's eye, Horatio."

"Call me Bob, please," pleaded the youth as he turned with artless eagerness to the plate of strawberries.

"That I will. Here, take your money."

"Put it away till I finish these strawberries," said Bob.

"What! You trust me, a tramp, a thing of shreds and patches, with untold wealth?"

"Put it away, sir. It isn't untold. You just now told me it was fifty dollars, the same as I told you. Of course I trust you. If it

were a hundred times as much, I'd trust you with it."

The cheerful stranger lost his air of levity. A spasm of pain crossed his features.

"Thank you, Bob," he said simply.

"You're welcome," answered Bob, beaming upon his chance acquaintance and putting down with a lingering look the depleted plate.

"You've asked me how I came by this money. Do you want me to answer you?"

"Not for idle curiosity's sake," said the man, "but because anything concerning you is of deep interest to me."

"Well, up to last night, I was as happy a boy as lived in——you'll keep what I say a secret?"

"Cross my heart!" cried the man. "By every Faun and Dryad these woods may hold. Sure! What you say to me will go no further."

"As I was saying, I lived in Dubuque, and I was happy till last night; and then——then——"

Here the boy's features twitched convulsively, tears forced themselves to his eyes, a lump arose in his throat; he could go no further.

"Infandum, regina, jubes renovare dol-

orem," soliloquized the tramp, delicately turning his gaze from the sad-faced youth.

"Wh—wh—wh—what's that, sir?" blubbered Bob.

"Nay, sir me no sirs. Call me plain Tom, which the same is my name. Tom Temple at your service. As to what I was just saying, I was remarking in the classic tongue that I'm bidding you, O Faun of Iowa, to tell the untellable. Suppose you forget last night for a while and let me know something about your early days. I take it for granted, you began life as a prodigiously fat baby."

"I reckon so, Tom; but I don't remember that far back. My mother is dead. Pa says she died when I was six months old. He is some sort of a money lender. He's always buying mortgages on farms and things like that; and people say that if a man wanted to get ahead of him, he would have to get up very early in the morning and stay up all night."

"I fancy him," mused Tom Temple, "a nice, gray-headed old gentleman, with gleaming spectacles and soft, gentle, blue eyes, and a smile that is always on duty with never a vacation, and fat rosy cheeks, and a ringing laugh——"

"I say," protested Bob, "that isn't a bit like

my father. He's not grayhaired, and he doesn't wear spectacles, and his eyes aren't blue, and his cheeks aren't fat nor rosy, and when he laughs——"

"Oh, he *does* laugh!" interrupted Tom.

"There's no ring about it. It's more like a cackle."

"I beg your pardon, Bob; I fear I am mixing him up with Mr. Pickwick."

"Anyhow," continued Bob, "he was always good to me. He gave me a penny every morning——"

"And did he caution you not to squander it?"

"What's that?"

"I mean, did he warn you each time not to spend it all at once?"

"That's the only way you *can* spend a penny," said Bob.

"I stand corrected. So he gave you a penny every day?"

"Yes, to buy my lunch at school."

"Such generosity moves me too deep for tears," Tom observed with dry eyes.

"And sometimes," continued Bob triumphantly, "he gave me a whole nickel."

"At Christmas time, possibly," suggested Tom.

"Say, how did you guess that? And he never bothered me, nor whipped me, and once he gave me a whole quarter."

"Pro-dig-ious!" gasped the tramp.

"He had an old house-keeper who was so kind and good to me. I used to read stories to her. She—she—loved me."

"Evidently the woman had taste."

"And I had all the books I wanted. The lady at the library was so good to me. She used to save up books she thought I'd like. And my teachers at the public school were the nicest ladies you ever saw."

"How their ears must be burning now. And I suppose they were nice to you, too?"

"You bet they were. I'd do anything for any one of them. The last one was the nicest of them all. She was my teacher in the seventh grade. I just finished it three weeks ago, and came out head of the class. But I'd never have come out head, if she hadn't been good to me. Oh, I tell you she was nice."

"As you speak," apostrophized Tom Temple, "I can picture her before me to the life; a fair creature with golden hair, and dimples upon chin and cheek; and as to her complexion, 'there is a garden in her face, where roses and white lilies blow'; and a young voice, soft as the fall of rose leaves, teeth of pearl, and a mouth

which 'when her lovely laughter shows' looks 'like rosebuds filled with snow.' "

"Oh, stop!" implored Bob; "this isn't a fairy story. She weighed about a hundred and sixty-five pounds, and her hair was turning gray; there were no dimples that you could notice, but she had gold eyeglasses, and the only roses about her were on her desk now and then, and she was old enough to be your mother."

"I plainly perceive," said Tom, "that I am confusing your seventh-grade teacher with the heroine of any story in the popular magazines of the day. Once more, I beg your pardon."

"I loved her," said Bob simply. "She was good to me—and—and she prayed for me every day. She told me so."

"Ah, she was a deaconess!"

"She was a Catholic. And I'm one, too."

"Is there anybody else you loved?"

"I should say so. There was little Angela, the cripple. She did ever so much for me when I came to see her each day. You could see she was glad to see me. I told her everything I read, and she—she—taught me my prayers. As long as I live I'll never forget the little lame girl who taught me to pray."

"Didn't your father do that?"

"Say, Tom," said Bob confidentially, "that was a queer thing about him. He never went

to church, and never let me go, either. I'll tell you what—I didn't know I had any religion till about a year ago, and then one day my pa got mad."

"What did you do to get him angry?"

"He caught me bringing in a lame dog that I wanted to fix up, and he called me a Catholic cur, and said he could see my Baptism sticking out all over me."

"Did he seem to trace a distinct connection between Catholic Baptism and disabled dogs?"

"He didn't say anything like that; but after he cooled down a little he seemed to be awful sorry. He said that Catholic baptism didn't mean anything, and that set me to looking it up. Little Johnny Smith, one of my best friends, told me a lot. He's blind, and I used to go see him every day. And Mrs. Keller, who is bedridden, told me a lot more. She's one of my best friends, too. And little Angela fixed me up, so that I've got nearly as far as Confession."

"Bob," said Tom with more gravity than he had hitherto shown. "I'm not a Catholic myself, but I can't help respecting the most wonderful institution in the world; and the man who doesn't is either a Philistine or he has a blind spot in his brain."

"I guess you're right," said Bob, looking puzzled.

"Any more friends?"

"Oh, just shoals of them. Even the girls in our grade like me; and they don't mind letting me know."

"All the dogs and cats in your town love to greet you, I dare say."

"Well, not all. All those in our neighborhood and a lot of others I have met make a lot of fuss about me."

"I thought so," mused Tom. "When I first saw you I took you for a cherub, a fat Michael Angelo cherub. When you handed me all your money, I began to see the seraphic in you. But now I've come to the conclusion that you ought to be called Francis."

"Why Francis?"

"After one of the sweetest and noblest men that ever lived, St. Francis of Assisi. He was a man who loved the birds of the air, the fishes in the water, and every animal of the woodlands. He called the sun his brother, and his love embraced everything that God had made —most of all the particular thing I happen to possess in abundance just now."

"What's that, Tom?"

"Poverty. He called her 'My Lady Poverty,' and so he loved the poor."

"That's the kind of a saint I like," said Bob emphatically, "and did he love little children?"

"Good gracious, boy, who doesn't? Even soured souls like myself love the little ones."

"Don't you go and call yourself names, Tom. When I grow up, I want to talk like you, and be like you."

Tom Temple threw his pipe to the ground.

"Bob Ryan," he said, slowly, emphatically, "before I'd have you come to be like me, I'd prefer to see you as you are, lying dead before me."

Bob placed his right fist under his chin, his left hand supporting the elbow, and gazed amazedly at the solemnest tramp imaginable.

"Now look you, my boy," continued Tom. "In this world we get what we deserve; and we only deserve by giving. You have gone through life loving your neighbor, inclusive of cats and dogs, and as a result dogs and cats without exception love you, and even human beings return your affection. You are getting precisely what you are giving, and so it will be to the end. As you go on in life, you may come upon things which may tend to sour your affection—but for God's sake, don't change. You are right now, and if you change you will be wrong. Everything that God made is

worth loving. As a poet you will one day love says:

> 'He prayeth well who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast.' "

"I'd like to read some more of that poet," said Bob.

"Well, now for the story of last night. Are you ready to tell it?"

To the incidents related in our opening chapter Mr. Tom Temple lent an attentive ear.

"There's a mystery here," he said at the end; "and I'll have to put on my thinking cap before I make any comments. By the way, how would you like to tramp south with me?"

"I should love it," cried the boy afire with enthusiasm.

"How nice of you. Do you happen to have any writing paper about your person?"

Bob put a hand in his inside coat pocket, and drew out a memorandum book.

"Tear out what you want," he said.

Tom extracted five small leaves.

"And now if you'll excuse me," he then said, "I'm going to jot down a few ideas while I happen to have them, and then for our tramp southward."

"And while you're jotting your notes, I'll take a good wash."

When Tom returned fifteen minutes later, it was with a smile upon his face. He had reason to be happy; for in the few moments of separation he had committed to paper as pretty a poem as had ever fallen from his imaginative pen.

CHAPTER III

Discovering a winding path, an open road, a savage dog, and dinner for two.

"THIS road we're taking," observed Bob, as with lusty stride the two set forth, "seems to be turning into a path—a crooked one, at that. Do you know which way it goes?"

"Listen, my son, to the words of wisdom dropped from a modern pen, words that have not as yet found their way into book form:

'I like a road that leads away to prospects white and fair,
A road that is an ordered road, like a nun's evening prayer;
But, best of all, I love a road that leads to God knows where.' "

"Say, Tom, I like that."

"You do? A friend of mine, Mr. Charles Hanson Towne, wrote it. Next time I meet him I'll tell him what you said. Listen once more:

'You tramp along its dusty way, beneath its
shadowy trees,
And hear beside you chattering birds or
happy, booming bees,
And all around you golden sounds, the green
leaves' litanies.' "

"Why, he must have been talking about this very place," cried Bob. "The way is dusty; and now, after that poet man has said it, I like it to be dusty. And the trees are shadowy. And just think of his calling the bees happy, booming bees. And he's got in the birds and the leaves. I never noticed till now how nice leaves sound when they're moved. Say, Tom, I want to be a poet."

"You are one already, Bob."

"How's that?"

"Your life is a poem set to the music of love with sunshine effects. You don't have to write poetry—yet. Now I'm a poet, people say, myself; but of a different kind. I scribble things that people read, but they are the things that I have failed to get into my life. In other words, I think poetry and live prose."

"You aren't living prose now," commented Bob. "To walk along this way, not knowing where you're going, with all the things around

you that that poet talks about—why that ain't prose. Give us some more of it, Tom."

"By Jove, you're right, Bob. The poet saw this place. In fact, that's the great thing with poets; they see things that everybody else sees, only they see them differently. And when we've read their words, we go out and look at the same old things, only in another and far more beautiful light. They lift the veil of the commonplace from our eyes."

"I think," said Bob wistfully, "that I understand you a little bit, just like a minute ago I felt glad that the road was dusty."

"Exactly, Bob; you understand what I said more than a little bit. Poets and saints make everything put on a new beauty and a new glory. If we are saints, we see things in some such way as God sees them, in some such way as Christ considered the lilies of the fields, and, like God, we see that all things are good. That's why people were so jolly and happy in the Middle Ages. They looked upon the world with the anointed eyes of faith."

"I wish," said Bob admiringly, "that I knew all the things you do."

"And I wish," retorted Tom Temple, "that I felt all the things you feel——But to return to our poet. I repeat with you that he saw this place. Listen to him once more:

'A winding road, a loitering road, a finger-
mark of God,
Traced when the Maker of the world leaned
over ways untrod.
See! Here He smiled His glowing smile,
and lo, the goldenrod!' "

"That's so," said Bob with just the least shade of indifference in his voice. After all, he was but a seventh grade boy, and his attention was beginning, quite naturally, to flag. It is easier for such a one to live than to talk poetry.

A few moments later the path took a sudden turn, disclosing to the two tramps "an ordered road."

"Our dream is over," Tom observed. "And now we go southwards."

They turned and, walking briskly, for some time proceeded in silence.

"Look!" cried Tom presently. "See it there; the poet got that in, too:

'And here's a hedge, and there's a cot; and
then—strange, sudden——' "

Tom Temple left the line unfinished. A startling interruption halted the words in his mouth. Forth from the cottage yard sprang a mastiff—as fierce a looking dog as Tom

Temple had ever seen—and with savage bark dashed straight towards the two adventurers.

"Stand back," roared Tom, catching the boy around the shoulders and swinging him to the rear.

"Let me do it," returned the boy quickly, and before Temple could realize what had happened Bob thrust himself to the fore.

"Halloa, old boy," he cried out in high, clear, and strangely caressing tones. "This way, old chap. That's the dog!" And dropping human speech, Bob proceeded to utter a sound that was neither a hiss nor a whistle, but something of the nature of both, and, at the same time, strangely soothing. And lo! the dog ceased barking, trotted up quietly to the boy as to an old friend, and held up his head expectantly for a caress. And Bob, sinking to his knees, threw his arms around the mastiff's head.

"Give me your paw," said Bob.

Up came the paw, and the two, if the phrase may be permitted, shook hands.

"Good-by, old fellow; don't forget me," continued Bob, arising, waving his hand, and catching the arm of Tom Temple.

As the two walked off together the dog gave a low moan, gazing wistfully after the fat youth who had found such sudden favor in his

eyes, and, still with a long, lingering look, returned, a wiser and a better dog, to his proper place.

"Little St. Francis!" ejaculated the most astonished tramp probably that ever walked along that road. "You've given me a thrill. That beats all my experiences."

"That's nothing," returned Bob. "All dogs are nice fellows. They look savage sometimes because they don't understand."

"I've met many a dog with never a bite for the meeting," Tom Temple observed, "but that's not *my* way of dealing with 'em."

"What's your way?"

"My way, as the poet Milton would express it, is this: I kicks 'em in the slats."

"That's not the right way," protested Bob. "Next time you meet 'em you'll have to kick 'em again. No wonder dogs get suspicious."

"Do you ever talk to fishes?" asked Tom.

"I never did that. How can you?"

"St. Anthony did; and they came up to hear him."

"I think that's another saint I'm going to like. I'd like to have a talk with a fish. But, I say, Tom, I want to tell you something."

"Fire away, gentle Faun; I'm all ears."

"Well, we're partners, aren't we?"

"Fast!" answered Tom emphatically.

"Well, what's mine is yours. I've got a little money, and you've got——"

Here Bob hesitated, while Mr. Temple grinned.

"Well, you've got things that money can't buy stored away under that old hat of yours."

"Loads of lumber," assented Tom, "which by a stretch of the imagination might be termed learned."

"Lumber!" echoed Bob indignantly. "You're not a block-head! Anyhow, I want you to act as treasurer in this partnership business and do all the buying. I don't mind saying that I like a square meal."

"And," put in Tom, "you like it three times a day."

"That's it. And I want you to see that we get it."

"I agree on two conditions, O forest Faun. First, that you allow me to be the cook!"

"You do the cooking! Oh, I say, that's not fair!"

"I take a pride in my cooking, my boy. I'm a born chef. Often, oh, how often, do I think that in making profession of being an indifferent literary man—when I'm not a tramp—I have robbed the world of a great cook. As the senior member of this firm, I insist on acting as cook."

"All right, then," sighed Bob. "Anyhow, you'll let me act as assistant."

"For the sake of harmony, yes. Now as to the second condition. It's a burning shame that I should use up on myself the money of a boy who hasn't a friend at hand."

"I've got *you!*" cried Bob warmly.

"Good God!" the man burst out. He added more quietly, "You don't know me, boy, or you'd not say that. Anyhow, when my ship comes in—and I've many a ship trying to find a port in editorial harbors—I insist that you take back half our expenses."

"No, I won't neither."

"You will!"

"I won't."

Tom took his pipe out of his hat, lighted it, drew a few slow puffs, then, standing stock still, caught the boy's hand.

"Good-by, Bob. I'm going north."

"Oh, I say," protested Bob, "you're not going to leave me? Shucks, if you feel that way about it, you can pay me anything you please."

"All right, partner. Then ho! for the sunny south on the open road in the summer-time and the heart of a friend to lighten the way. Southward, march!"

At noon they found a shady grove a few

hundred yards off from the broad highway; and by the time Bob had built a brisk fire Tom Temple had gone and returned with bread, condiments, coffee, and two pounds of beefsteak.

Bob succeeded in being allowed to make the toast, which he did in a manner creditable to hand and to head. Doubtless there was many a banquet in the land that day; but nowhere, I dare say, was there a guest who enjoyed his feast as these two enjoyed their simple beefsteak dinner.

Bob had engaged to do the "cleaning up." His work was simpler than he anticipated. When dinner was over there was nothing left.

CHAPTER IV

Wanderings through woods, down roads, and in literature. Bob captured by a band of children, escapes by turning into an angel nurse.

YOUTH, poignant as are its sorrows, is quick to forget. And so it came to pass that Master Robert Ryan in the inspiring company of Tom Temple entered upon a new phase of gaiety and joy. Evening came, another hearty meal, and then a bed in a hay-stack. There followed another day on the open road, much like the first. On the second night they played the part of the Babes in the Wood and slept tranquilly in the heart of a forest. That the robins failed to cover the two wayfarers with leaves is due, no doubt, to the fact that both were up with the sun. And ever as they walked, on dusty or well-ordered road, Tom Temple spoke of poetry and of great writers, especially of William Shakespeare. On various occasions, in the woodlands, he gave the intent and eager youth almost the entire plays of *As You Like It, Midsummer's Night's Dream,* and *Winter's Tale.* Mr. Temple, the

many-sided, was an actor, too. He had worn the buskin, and in few years played many parts. It is not too much to say that in these happy days Bob Ryan was unconsciously making a course in literature such as few boys are lucky enough to receive and appreciate.

To the unconcealed gratification of the lad, their daily expenses were very light. Bob passed no child, boy or girl, without making friendly overtures, almost invariably returned. Fond mothers, seeing him so regardful of their children, were quick to extend their hospitality. Eggs and milk and cream and corn-cake and fruit were pressed upon these cheerful knights of the road, and, on the tenth evening, they were practically forced to accept the shelter of an honest farmer who was happy in a buxom wife and nine children, these latter ranging in age from two to sixteen years.

On that evening Bob was the central figure. He sang not, he talked little, and had few stories to tell; yet somehow he held the children spellbound. In the matter of games he was quite ingenious and inventive. At ten o'clock, two hours after their regular time, the children were forced to go to bed, which they did, half of them in tears. The youngest child, indeed, kicked and howled and refused to accept the situation with any sort of tranquillity.

"I want Bob," he protested between yells that were ear-piercing.

It looked for a few minutes as though there would be little sleep in that house, as the infant refused to be consoled. But our young hero rose to the situation. Leaving the farmer and Tom Temple, he followed the mother, whom he found holding down by physical force the love-lorn infant in his cradle, and, motioning her away, took the babe's hands in his. And then there came a great quiet upon the house, save for the sibilant crooning of the beloved fat boy. The crooning lasted for hardly more than two minutes. Then it ceased, and Bob, disengaging his hand, left the child locked in slumber.

The two wanderers were up, bright and early, the next morning.

At breakfast the farmer hinted that he would be pleased to add Bob to his already sufficiently numerous family. When the children got the idea, grasped first by the sixteen-year-old girl and percolating down to the infant, loud and tremendous enthusiasm ensued.

But Bob was adamant.

"I've got to go further south. It's awfully nice of you to think of me that way; but I'm under marching orders."

Then the six junior members of the family —a pair of twins in the number—fell upon him. They insisted that they would not let him go. A twelve-year-old boy, with the enterprise so characteristic of his age and sex, secured a rope, and was just about to tie Bob to his chair surreptitiously, when an unexpected diversion put his machinations to naught and sent the children scurrying away, reduced to the habitual bashfulness so marked in the youth living on farms.

A man entered without the preliminary of a knock. He was apparently a well-to-do farmer.

"Why, Jones," cried the master of the house, "what's the matter?"

"My little boy, my only child, is worse. He won't eat, and he didn't sleep last night, and he just lies on his bed looking up at the ceiling and takes no interest in nothing."

"Can I do anything for you?" asked Bob's host.

"Yes; couldn't you get the doctor? I'm afraid to leave the boy and his mother. Anything might happen when I'm gone."

"Sure! Glad you asked me."

"Dad, let me go," pleaded the older boy.

"I was going myself; but all right. Saddle the mare and lose no time."

"Thank you ever so much," said Jones. "I must hurry back at once."

"And," cried the sympathetic mother, "as soon as I've cleared away the breakfast things, I'll be right over. Is there anything we can bring you—eggs or fruit or wine?"

"We have everything," answered the man gratefully; "but my wife will be glad to have you, Mrs. Owens. God bless you all. Good-by."

Before the man had fully turned everybody in the room was startled by a demonstration on the part of Master Bob Ryan.

"Oh, say, mister," he cried, springing forward and catching the man's arm entreatingly, "let me go with you to see your little boy."

Mr. Jones, as was quite natural, looked amazed. A very fat boy, a perfect stranger, with an eager, sympathetic face and wistful entreaty in his eyes, was certainly out of the ordinary. He turned his eyes on that cherubic face in momentary puzzlement.

"Take him along, Jones," cried Owens.

"By all means, take him," seconded the wife. "He has a wonderful way with children."

"Come along, son," said Jones.

And before the children could rise in rebellion, Bob was gone.

Jones' house was not more than half a mile's

distance down the road. It was an attractive bungalow with roses, red and plentiful, adding their perfume and rich color to the beauty of the exterior. Within, everything showed taste, comfort, and the deft hand of a thrifty woman.

"This way," said the owner, throwing open a door and motioning Bob to enter.

It was a small, sunny, tastily arranged room, with windows looking out upon the south and east. Flowers were upon the sills; flowers, newly gathered, upon a table beside a little bed, its coverlet no whiter than the drawn face of the little child who lay upon it. Beside the bed sat a young woman, pale, agitated, and quite distraught.

"Oh!" she cried, "have you got him? I can't bear it; I shall go mad."

"We've sent for him, my dear," answered the husband, as the wife came forward and caught him hysterically by the shoulders. "He'll be here soon."

"Look here," said Bob to Jones in an easy tone as though he had lived in the house for years, "you take your wife out and get her a cup of tea. I'll watch. I've often waited on the sick."

"Come on, my dear," said Jones.

The woman looked in astonishment at the

rosy-cheeked cherub, and her husband followed her example.

Paying no attention to either, Bob Ryan, quick of eye and of action, felt the sick boy's brow, picked up a small towel, dipped it in the water pitcher, and placed it with a caressing touch upon the invalid's head.

"Come on, wife," whispered the man.

As the two left the room they heard a peculiar sound—a sort of cheerful moan, if one may imagine such a thing—proceeding from the mouth of the Iowa cherub.

The door had scarcely closed upon them when the little boy, stimulated by the strange sound, suddenly removed his eyes from the ceiling and turned them upon his new nurse. His gaze was rewarded with the most genial smile imaginable.

The little boy shut his eyes; then, after a few seconds, opened them and gazed again. No, he was not dreaming. It was a real smile —and this time it was accompanied by a low, rich, rumbling chuckle.

Then the little boy did something he had not done in days. He smiled.

"Howdy do!" cried the cherub.

The little boy's smile became more pronounced.

"Howdy do!" *sang* the cherub, holding out a chubby hand.

Then the little boy, who was wondering doubtless whether all angels were fat, took a hand from under the coverlet, a tiny, wasted hand, and let it sink into the big, hospitable palm of the happy nurse.

Holding the little hand, Bob chuckled rumblingly.

In answer, the child laughed back—a high-pitched tiny laugh.

Mrs. Jones was at the door all this time, and it is not to her discredit, I claim, that her right eye was glued to the keyhole. When her little Johnnie took his eyes from the ceiling the color returned to her cheeks; when his hand came forth from the coverlet she turned and nodded her head cheerfully to her husband who stood beside her; but when little Johnnie laughed she arose, threw her arms about Mr. Jones, and observed brightly that she'd take some tea.

Her husband joined her in that amiable refection.

CHAPTER V

From sorrow to joy, from sunshine to storm. Bob and Tom Temple, both in extreme fright, are rescued by a remarkable ancient of the people.

WHEN the doctor arrived half an hour later, he encountered upon the portico of the Jones household a smiling woman and a cheerful-faced man sitting with clasped hands and in utter silence. As he reached the stoop, the woman released her hands and put her finger to her lips.

"What's the matter?" whispered the doctor. "Is little Johnnie dead?"

"Oh, no!" whispered the woman radiantly.

"Not at all," chuckled the man.

"I must have got the wrong house. You people," he went on to say, as the couple again joined hands, "want a clergyman, I reckon, but not a doctor."

"What's that?" asked Jones.

"You want to get married, don't you?"

The doctor was becoming sarcastic.

"Come on and look!" whispered the wife,

tiptoeing to the door of the sick child's room. The doctor noiselessly followed after, and the husband, with a great awe upon his face, as though he were about to gaze upon a vision of the heavenly city, imitated his example.

Turning the knob gently, and slowly pushing open the door, Mrs. Jones turned to the doctor as who should say, "Now what do you think of that?"

It was not exactly a reproduction of the new Jerusalem which greeted the doctor's eyes; but it filled his professional soul with delight.

Seated beside the bed, Master Bob Ryan, his chin supported by his right hand and his right elbow supported by the left hand, was gazing serenely upon a little boy into whose cheeks the color had returned and who was sleeping peacefully with the suspicion of a smile and of happy dreams upon his features.

The doctor tiptoed in, and laid his hand gently upon the sleeper's brow. He felt Johnnie's pulse, during which operation Bob slipped from the room. For the first time since his entrance into the house Bob lost his presence of mind; for forthwith Mrs. Jones threw her arms around his neck and imprinted upon his blushing cheeks, as though they were in France, two hearty kisses. Mr. Jones then caught the boy's hand and gave it such a

squeeze that Bob in struggling not to cry out forgot his embarrassment.

Then out tiptoed the doctor in smiles.

"The crisis," he said, "is over. I had no idea it would come so soon, much less pass so quickly. When your boy wakes he'll be calling for food, which, by the way, you will not give him. I'll be around again in four or five hours."

"And he'll get well?" asked the wife.

"He is well now—only very weak."

"Thank you so much, doctor," said Mr. Jones, reaching into his pocket and drawing out his purse.

"Oh, no!" cried the man of medicine waving him off resolutely. "If you want to pay any one, pay that Michael Angelo cherub."

At this juncture, Tom Temple entered. With the exchange of a few words he learned the situation.

"Bob!" he exclaimed, "the sun is high in the heavens, and, from the reports I have just now received, 'all's right with the world.' I hear the call of the road, the open road, the road that leads anywhere or nowhere, the broad highway; and if you don't hurry, the whole Owens family will be down upon you to bring you back captive."

The happy couple and the doctor protested

as one; but again Bob was adamant, and presently forth issued the two to face the open once more.

"You said," began Bob, "that you heard the call of the road. Did you mean it?"

"In a way, I did, Doctor Bob."

"Well, there's something calling me. I don't think it's the road; in fact, I don't know what it is but I feel uneasy unless I keep on going."

"Going whither, O enchanter of youth?"

"That's what puzzles me. As the song we used to sing has it, 'I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way.' "

"Do you know, Bob, that I've been thinking a good deal about your father's conduct toward you."

"And have you found out what it all meant?"

"Let me ask you a question. Have you ever signed any documents at your father's request?"

"Why, yes; I did twice. It was just a few weeks ago."

"Ah! I think I have it. Your father, from what you have told me, is keen on bargains. Possibly some of his deals, while not actually dishonest, might give him trouble, if brought into court. Now it's just possible that your

signature has to do with some such transaction. The lawyers were getting after him, and so he thought best to get you out of the road."

"Do you know, Tom, I think you've hit it? I remember he wouldn't let me read those two papers I signed; and then, the morning of the very day my father took me away there were two queer-looking fellows hanging about the house for hours. When my father saw them he got very excited. Then he took me out the back way, and the two of us made a sneak to the railroad station."

"I believe I've hit it right this time. While you were acting as doctor to that nice little boy I got hold of a local paper and learned that your father has disappeared, too. He has not been heard from since the two of you left Dubuque."

Just as Bob was about to express his astonishment the sound of running feet caused the pair to turn. Breathless and flurried, Mr. Jones caught up with them.

"Excuse me," he gasped, "for interrupting you. But," producing a dainty, sealed envelope, "my wife who is grateful to you, Bob, has asked me to hand you this note. And you're not to open or read it till noontime. You promise?"

"Anything she wants I'll do," said Bob, ac-

cepting the envelope and putting it in his pocket.

"Thank you. If you ever come this way again, do call and stay as long as you like."

Then Mr. Jones bade them a hearty farewell.

After their twelve o'clock meal, Bob took out the envelope and tore it open.

"O look!" he exclaimed, waving a crisp twenty-dollar bill.

"It's the price of a poem!" cried Tom. "Is there no letter in the envelope?"

"Just a card which says 'With love and gratitude.' Say, Tom, would you mind walking back with me?"

"So you're going to return the money?"

"Of course I am."

"Do you think the Joneses would be pleased if you brought it back?"

"That's not the point."

"Well, it's *one* of the points. Suppose you think it over while I turn aside and do a little scribbling."

"Well, Cherub of Iowa," queried Tom Temple half an hour later, "have you done your thinking?"

Bob, who was sitting on a stump, his chin pillowed upon his hand, his eyes gazing into space, arose at the question.

"Yes, Tom, I have. I'm going to keep that money; and I've got an idea."

"Good! Let's hear it."

"The night my father sent me to shift for myself, I was quite willing to go to work. The fact is I rather liked the idea of earning my own living. But now I've changed my mind."

"Don't tell me, Bob, that you're going to be a useless, no-account tramp like me. If I've brought you to love this way of living, I've added one more to my huge catalogue of blunders."

"Don't call yourself a tramp, Tom. You're not. You're a writer and a scholar."

"Or rather a cheap imitation. Bob, I want you to understand that I'm a failure."

Bob was mystified.

"Anyhow," the boy went on, "that twenty-dollar bill set me to thinking that I could earn and save these summer months."

"Yes?" said Tom with the rising inflexion.

"And then I could go back to school."

"What school?"

"There's a school for me somewhere further south. You see, Tom, I've been listening to you talking about great books and quoting poetry; and I'd like to be able to talk like you and think like you when I grow up."

Tom's face went crimson under his tan.

"You don't know me," he said humbly. "I can't explain to you yet, Bob; but I will some day—some far-off day—and then you'll understand. I haven't the courage to tell you now. Anyhow, kindly keep in mind that I'm a failure. But it's not on account of my reading or studies. As for your resolve to keep on at school, I think you have chosen the better part. I would like to promise you that I'd help you out; but my life is full of broken promises, and I no longer dare trust myself."

"Look here, Tom, you talk as if you were feeling blue."

"I have a presentiment, Bob, that something is going to happen which will dissolve our jolly fellowship and send us both drifting apart. We are but ships that pass in the night."

As the issue will show, Tom Temple proved to be, to his own poignant regret and keen shame, a prophet.

On the following afternoon, they were trudging along cheerily, when clouds suddenly massed themselves in the east, the air grew sensibly and suddenly cooler, and the rumbling of distant thunder gave presage of a storm.

"We're going to get a drenching, I fear," Tom observed, looking up at the fast clouding sky. "There's not a house in sight, and the only shelter I can see are those woods, and they're fully a mile away."

As if to lend force to his statement, a flash of lightning cut its forked path through the gathering gloom, followed a second after by a clap of thunder.

"Let's run for it," shouted Bob.

For answer, Tom Temple broke into a trot. The "Iowa Cherub" was not slow to follow his example. For a few minutes all went well. But the storm was at their heels and traveling swiftly. Another blinding flash of light followed almost instantaneously by a burst of thunder had an extraordinary effect on both.

"My God," cried Temple, breathing heavily, and putting his hands to his brow, "I'm all in."

Bob, meanwhile, was reverently making the sign of the cross.

"What's the matter, Tom? You look scared."

"My nerve is gone. Don't mind me, Bob. I'm sowing what I have——"

Just then the rain began to fall upon them torrentially.

"Go on, Bob, you're not winded. Make for those woods. Leave me to myself. I'm sick and ashamed. Save yourself."

"Here," said Bob, his chubby face aglow with sympathy, "take this, and hold it in your hand."

"What is it?" asked Tom as he received it.

"It's the medal of the Mother of God; what they call the miraculous medal. Hold it tight, Tom. You're not a Catholic; all the same I've heard you say some mighty nice things about the Blessed Virgin, and you can just bet your life she doesn't forget them."

A trace of color returned to Tom's cheeks.

"Come on," he said with a wan smile, and resumed his jog-trot.

But the pitiless rain spared them not. They were soon wet to the skin. Another blinding flash, another ear-piercing burst of thunder.

"Holy Mother of God be with me," issued in low tones from Tom's throat. He could run no longer. His heart was pounding. Bob put his arm about his companion's waist.

"Lean on me, Tom," he said.

And so they proceeded till in a short time they reached the woods.

"Now we're all right," cried Bob cheerily, as they threaded their way among the trees. "How do you feel now, Tom?"

"I feel just the way I ought to feel," he returned, with bitter self-contempt in his every accent. "I'm no better than a yellow dog——"

"There are some mighty nice yellow dogs," interpolated Bob.

"I'm a mockery of a man. A real man rises

to the occasion; but there's no such reaction in me. God forgive me! I am punished justly for the follies of a wasted youth; my courage, my manliness is gone.

All this was more or less Greek to the sympathetic cherub.

"Here we are!" he said. "This is a mighty oak-tree, and the rain doesn't get through. We'll stay here till the storm is past. Say, Tom, you're shivering. Are you cold?"

"I'm afraid," answered Temple, vainly endeavoring to control his chattering teeth, "that I've got a chill."

Bob's distress was genuine. Here was a case that called for help, and he knew not what to do. The man needed warmth, heat, covering. Gladly would the boy have stripped himself to shelter his friend; but his clothes were wet through and through. While he was still pondering and praying, Tom said:

"Bob, may I keep this medal?"

"Sure! Keep it forever."

The man raised the sweet image to his lips and reverently kissed it. In the very act there was a simultaneous flash of blinding lightning and a violent explosion of thunder. Round about the two rolled fiery balls; from the branches above their heads dropped a squirrel and a tiny bird, dead.

"Holy Mother!" gasped Temple, holding the image up. "I believe that but for thy gracious kindness that stroke was meant for me."

Even Bob was now really frightened.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that I've never been to Confession; anyhow I made an act of contrition."

The tragedy of their circumstances was at this moment suddenly lightened by the appearance of the strangest old man that Bob had ever seen.

An ancient hat, bright with braid and trimmings, suggesting now the head-gear of a cowboy, now the Mexican sombrero, lent picturesqueness to a venerable shirt open at the hairy throat and to a pair of blue-jeans trousers, patched here and there with canvas. Beneath the hat was a strong, benevolent face, full-colored by life in the open, yet, despite the strong bright eyes, betraying the old age of its owner. Over his shoulder he carried a fishing pole, and from his right hand hung a string of fish.

"Good-day, genteelmen. How do you do?" cried the ancient fisherman, removing his cap and bowing profoundly. "Say, genteelmen, I tell you somet'ing. When de t'under he smash, and de lightning he strike, you get away from dem trees. Come wiz me."

"Shake!" cried Bob joyously, catching the old man's disengaged hand. "You're as welcome as the visit of an angel. Do you live around here?"

"No, boy; I tell you de troot. I am eighty-one year old already two mont' ago."

Tom Temple, still unnerved, had taken Bob's hand; and, guided by that ancient fisherman, they were now pursuing an open path through the woods.

"My!" exclaimed Bob, "that's a good old age. But you're not too old to go fishing, are you?"

"Yes," said the old man. "I bin married by my second wive already twenty year. My wive, he is older dan I. My wive, he is not Cat'lic like myselv; but he pray. He pray ev'y nide."

"That's fine," said Bob, at once enthusiastic and puzzled. "And she's strong and well, too?"

"Oh, not wot I use to be," answered the ancient. "Twenty-five year ago—I tell you de troot, I will not lie to you, because I like you —I was de stronges' man from Dubuque to Davenport. My chest, he still good; but my legs dey iz roomatiz. Dis mornin' dey pain me moosh. I knew, den, de storm he comin'."

"You have wonderfully broad shoulders and a splendid chest," pursued Bob.

"No," answered the old man earnestly. "I did not get no education at all. I don' eider read nor write. I don' know nuttin'. But—I tell you de troot—my mudder, he brought me up good, and my fadder, he paddle me hard. Oh, yes, dey brought me up well, and I good Cat'lic."

"That," said Bob heartily, "is better than reading and writing, and a whole lot better than what people call riches."

"No," answered the ancient readily, "I am not reech. The money, much money, I had him once. But he fly away—so!"

Here the old fellow made a wide gesture with both hands, as a result of which his fishing pole and his fish gave a correct imitation of his flying dollars.

As Bob helped the man who had seen better days to recover his fish, he noticed that Tom Temple was choking. He took a second look at his friend. Tom Temple, he then discovered, was choking with suppressed merriment. The rain was now reduced to a light drizzle, and the rumblings of the thunder were faint and far.

"Well, you've got life and you've got a wife and——"

"No," continued the old man, convinced, as Bob hesitated, that the boy had formulated another question, "I live by the river mos' my life, but my wive he live by the citeeze."

"I'll bet she can read and write," Bob ventured to say.

"Not by me, but by her firs' husban'," returned the smiling old gentleman.

"What?" roared Bob.

There was an audible chuckle from Tom.

"Yes, by her firs' husban' my wive he have seven chillen; and me I have tree by my firs' wive—good Cat'lic woman. He be now up dere." The huge forefinger of the speaker pointed skywards.

"I hope we're all going there," said Bob.

"He is not much of a plaze," said the old man simply and with an apologetic smile.

"What!" gasped Bob.

This time there was a laugh from the silent member of the trio.

"No: my house," continued the genial guide, "is wot you call a hut. It is poor, but you are welcome."

"Oh," said Bob, much relieved, "I thought you were talking about heaven."

"For goodness' sake, Bob," broke in Tom Temple, "can't you see that the man is deaf?"

"Oh," cried Bob, raising his voice, "I beg your pardon, sir."

"Boy," said the old man impressively, standing stock still, and holding up his big forefinger. "I like you, and I tell you some-t'ing. I tell you de troot, because why? I like you. My name is Mose, and I am a little bit deef."

"Much obliged to you for telling me," roared Bob.

"Yes, boy. I tink de storm, he go south, and de wedder he clear up."

"I'd like to see the sunshine again," said Tom Temple with unaffected devotion.

"You'll see it," returned the ancient, "if you look straight ahead."

The old man was not referring to sunshine but to his house. They had just come out of the woods, and before them, in the heart of a big open space that bordered the mighty Mississippi, stood, lone and solitary, a primitive hovel, surrounded by several trees.

"Genteelmen," continued the man, "dere is my 'ome. I have de honor to ask you to come in and be my jests."

He bowed them in; but what they saw and said and heard and did is so strange and unusual that we must give it all the benefit of a new chapter.

CHAPTER VI

Introducing the remarkable old man's remarkable old wife, revealing the secret which had made Tom Temple a wanderer upon the earth, and ending under dramatic circumstances with Tom Temple's disappearance.

As Tom and Bob entered the ancient fisherman's home, they took no note of the simple but strangely ordered interior; of the big iron stove at the left of the door; of the three windows on the other three sides of the hut; of the trunk in a corner, beside it a large wardrobe which had seen better days; of the rude ceiling, the greater part of its carpentry plainly revealed, a small portion over a double bed protected by a cover of linoleum. A square table and several chairs also escaped their attention. For, on entering, their eyes were focussed at once on a sight which made it fairly impossible to pay regard just then to anything else.

Against the wall and beneath the window opposite the entry, a very old woman, with eyes of heavenly blue, was sitting full-dressed

in the center of the double bed, her feet drawn under her, and in her lips a pipe, at which she was pulling furiously. Each ear was stuffed with cotton, as the protruding tufts clearly indicated. The old lady's face, though without a wrinkle, was yellowed with age to the color of mahogany. She was facing, as it happened, the doorway; and, as her eyes fell upon the entering strangers, she removed her pipe, and said in a clear voice:

"I hate these darned thunderstorms. When they come I always get in bed, because I read when I was a girl that the bed is the safest place from the lightning. And I put cotton in my ears so I won't be deafened by that confounded thunder, and I smoke my pipe because it seems to steady my nerves."

"Hey! Anna," shouted the ancient man, "here be two nize genteelmen. They are very wet."

"Say that again, Mose," cried the woman, steadying her pipe between her teeth and pulling the cotton wadding from her ears.

Mose repeated his first statement; whereupon his venerable wife returned the cotton to her ears, and, still puffing at her pipe, arose.

"Here," she said presently, as she handed Bob a horse-blanket. "You put that on. I'll go outside till you've changed. And here,"

she added, giving a heavy white table-cloth to Tom Temple, "is something for you to wear."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Bob.

"What's that?" cried the old lady, pulling the cotton out of her ears.

"Thank you, ma'am," repeated the boy.

"You're welcome, I'm sure," she returned, bottling her ears once more.

"I thank you, too," said Tom Temple, "but I'm chilled to the quick."

"What's that?" she cried, again removing the cotton.

"Anna!" put in the ancient fisherman, "de t'under he am gone down de river. Trow de cotton away."

"My husband," said Anna, obeying him literally as she spoke, "is very deef. You must shout at him. Now what was it you were saying, young man?"

"I was saying," said the chattering tramp, "that I am chilled to the bone. Have you got anything to warm a fellow up?"

"To what?" asked the old lady, watching Tom's lips closely.

"To warm a fellow up?" repeated Tom.

"Oh, yes," returned the bright-eyed lady, turning those steady orbs of hers severely and with some hint of warning upon her husband; "we've got an excellent stove."

"Oh, the deuce! So you have," faltered Tom.

"What?" shouted the woman, looking at Temple's lips.

"I said, ma'am, that I noticed it; but it's not going."

"Mose," said the aged lady, pointing with her pipe to the door and raising her voice to a pitch wonderful in one of her years, "you go on out and find some dry wood; and be quick about it."

"Wood! Dere is tree log behin' de stove," remonstrated Mose sweetly and with raised forefinger.

"Go on!" yelled the old lady waving her pipe wildly. "We want more."

"The genteelman sore! Dey are not sore."

"More, *more,* MORE WOOD," screamed the old lady.

And Moses went.

No sooner had he gone than the wife became very active. Hastening back to the bedstead, she bent under, and from some mysterious corner produced a pint flask half filled with whiskey.

"Here! Come quick!" she cried. "I always keep a little on hand in case of sickness. But I don't let Mose know it. He's perfectly

healthy now, but if he knew I had this, he'd have a stomachache every day regularly." As she spoke, she whisked a glass from a shelf on the wall, and poured into it more than half the contents of the bottle.

"Drink!" she continued.

Tom Temple swallowed it down with perceptible eagerness.

"Child," continued the old lady, "will you take a little?"

"The stove is good enough for me, thank you."

"Hey?" she cried. "What's that is good enough for you?"

"The stove," roared Bob.

"You should be more distinct," returned the old lady. "I thought you said 'stone.' If you talk that way to my husband, he won't understand you at all. You see, he's deef. Now, I'm going outside, and I'll give you boys just about three minutes to change."

As the good woman, her pipe cocked at a jaunty angle, went out, the venerable Moses re-entered, bearing in his powerful arms several logs of wood; and while Bob and Tom changed with commendable rapidity, the head of the house started a roaring fire.

When the woman returned, Bob, looking like a blanket Indian, Tom Temple, a sheeted

ghost, and Mose, a Rip Van Winkle of the West, were grouped about the stove.

"Was ever home more cheery!" ejaculated Tom, into whose cheeks the color had returned, and into whose eyes there had come an expression which Bob had never seen before.

"Yes, Meestaire," returned Mose. "My wive, he is always cheery, especially when he smoke."

"Drat this weather," said the wife. "It always makes Mose deafer when it rains and thunders."

"My wive, he is well educated," continued Mose. "Her fader he was a ver' reech man."

"Bob," whispered the sheeted ghost to the blanket Indian, "talk about romance! If this woman would tell her story, I'll wager anything that it would prove that truth is stranger than fiction."

"Get her to tell her story, Tom. You could make a book of it, I'm sure."

"That," answered Tom, shifting his sheet, "is like advising boys to catch birds by putting salt on their tails. It is only in novels that people on invitation reveal the story of their lives. Outside of fiction, there are two classes of persons—people who can't tell their life's story, and people who won't. That old lady won't tell it; and, what's more, I doubt

whether she could, if she wanted to. Evidently, she has seen better days."

"Has she?" asked Bob.

"Not a doubt of it. And she wasn't raised in the country. She is city bred. Look at her now, very humped, and, save for her bright blue eyes, looking like a witch. I'll wager anything that sixty years ago she was a reigning belle, and that she was the cynosure of all the young men who met her, that she was besieged by throngs of suitors, and that, in the end, she married the most worthless of the lot."

"Excoos," broke in the venerable Mose, who had meanwhile been helping the subject of these remarks to prepare the fish for cooking; "but Meestaire Tom, I want to see you outside jus' once leettle moment."

Tom in wonder followed his host.

"Sh!" cried the old man, as he closed the door, putting his finger to his lips and rolling his speaking eyes ecstatically. "Come wiz me; I show you someting."

There was a well near by, securely boarded. To this the old man led the way. Getting down on his knees, he removed a single board, reached under and produced a flask.

"Meestaire Tom, you are cold. Take a drop of dis."

Tom Temple took a pull at the bottle. Evidently he understood the word "drop" figuratively.

"That's fine!" he said, catching his breath.

Mose carefully replaced the bottle and the plank, pumped up some water and filled a glass.

"Drink dis," he said; "and Meestaire Temple, be sure not tell my wive. I tell you de troot. He don' know I keep dis here. If my wive know, he come here, and he drink it all herselve."

"By the moon which ought to be shining in yon dark sky, but isn't, because of atmospheric conditions, I promise that ere I breathe a whisper of what has just taken place, wild horses shall rend me asunder."

"Daz wot I always said," returned Mose, nodding his head genially.

The two now filled their pipes and indulged, before returning to the hut, in a hurried smoke. This was done more as a matter of prudence.

"Tobacco," remarked Mose, "he take away de smell of de liquor."

The old lady and Bob, in the meantime, were not idle.

The Cherub begged leave to assist her, to

which offer she most graciously assented; and while they both worked industriously their conversation flowed freely.

"I'm glad you refused that liquor," said the lady of the hovel, smiling for the first time. "Drat the liquor anyhow. It brings people from carriages to the gutter."

"Yes, Mrs. Mose," assented Bob. "You must have had," he continued, "a good education; you talk so well."

"And never use profanity," continued "Mrs. Mose." "It doesn't do you any good, and it shocks your best friends. My father had the finest wholesale grocery in Cleveland. People used to cook for me, and now I cook for myself."

"And I think, Mrs. Mose," said Bob, "that there are not many cooks like you."

"Books I like!" said the old woman; "but I don't read books much nowadays. My eyes are bad, and I hate my confounded spectacles. I had beautiful eyes once."

"They're beautiful yet, Mrs. Mose," roared Bob.

"How nice of you to say so," returned Mrs. Mose with a genial smile. "And I was straight and erect, and carried myself like a queen. Why, the young men of my day wanted to marry me on sight."

"I'm sure," yelled Bob, "that they had very good taste."

"And we had our own carriage," pursued the old lady, removing the coffee from the stove. "And now I'd be riding in my own automobile, if I hadn't been such a darned fool."

"Don't say that, Mrs. Mose," yelled Bob.

"I will say it. I married a fellow for his pearly teeth and his black mustache."

"When you were very young?" cried the boy.

"And the mustache was dyed, and the teeth were false—so was he. There was only one good thing about him—he died young. If he had died younger," continued the aged creature, fixing her bright blue eyes upon Bob, "it would have been better. He waited long enough upon this earth to drink up all the money I had; and that's why I'm cooking you Mississippi fish."

"And mighty good fish it is, Mrs. Mose, and a mighty good cook you are," yelled the Cherub, very red faced from exertion.

"Child," said the old lady, "you need never kiss the Blarney stone." Here she smiled serenely. "I'd be glad," she continued, "to adopt you. Mose would be proud to have

you. We're all alone, and we both love young hearts and honest faces."

Bob was about to make answer, when the two conspirators returned. Supper was announced, and all fell to with alacrity—all save Tom Temple. He was not hungry: he wanted to talk.

And how he did rattle on! He quoted poetry, he sang, he jested, he arose and made a speech—and all this, for the benefit of Mose, at the top of his voice.

Had a stranger passed at this time that lone hut on the Mississippi river, he would have been much astonished. The shrill treble of Bob, the high tenor of Tom Temple, the deep tones of Mose, and the clear, incisive voice of the crooked lady, formed a shouting, unintermittent quartette that suggested pandemonium. Had he looked in and seen the woman with her pipe, Bob bull-blanketed, Tom Temple in what looked like a winding sheet, and Mose ever with his huge finger raised impressively, he would be confirmed in his suspicion that a company of lunatics was holding carnival.

Before the supper was well ended, Tom Temple, having asked a few questions about the neighboring village, slipped from the company, and taking with him his clothes, now

thoroughly dried by the fire, was absent for over an hour.

When he returned, he opened the door and beckoned mysteriously to Bob.

Excusing himself, Bob joined his companion.

Taking his arm, Tom Temple led him to the river bank.

"Bob," he said in strange tones. "I wish it was all over; I wish I was floating down that river."

"Good gracious, Tom, what's the matter?"

"I'm a traitor," said Tom in thick tones. "I'm not fit to look you in the eye."

"What is it, Tom?"

"Bob, I'll tell you a secret; I've been drinking."

Bob looked closely at his friend. Even in the fading light he could see that the man's eyes were watery and bloodshot, and that his facial control was gone. Tom's lips were loose.

"But that's not the worst of it," continued Temple. "I've used some of *your* money to buy that which a man puts into his mouth to steal away his brains."

Then Tom began to weep. Poor Bob, not knowing how maudlin men are wont to act, was fairly overcome.

"There's the stuff," Tom continued, drawing from his hip pocket a flask not entirely empty, "for which I made a beast of myself, and betrayed a friend—the best friend that God sent me since I left home a disgraced man on account of drink."

"You don't want any more of that, Tom," said Bob kindly, taking, as he spoke, the flask from the unhappy man's hand, "and we'll send it where it will do the least harm." Saying which Bob tossed the bottle into the river.

"And that's where *I'll* do the least harm, too," cried Tom, making for the brink.

"Hold on! hold on, Tom!" cried Bob rushing after him. "For God's sake don't do that!"

But before Bob could reach him, Tom plunged into the river, and sank at once.

CHAPTER VII

Introducing a doctor who puts service before money, and bidding farewell to the repentant Tom Temple and the once happy partnership, untimely dissolved.

"HELP! help!" shouted the boy. "Help! help!"

At about ten yards from the steep shore, the face of Tom Temple came to the surface, remained for a moment, and sank again.

Throwing off his blanket, Bob dived in boldly and swam towards the spot where Temple had disappeared. As he reached it the hapless man came up for the second time, and Bob caught his arm. Then Temple threw himself upon his would-be rescuer, and both went down. When they came up, Bob was free of only one arm and one leg. But Bob was a natural swimmer. Handicapped as he was, he struck out for the shore.

"Help! help!" he panted, striking out vigorously with his free arm. He made about three yards, when he sank again. The two remained under the surface for fully a quarter

of a minute; and when they arose, Bob, who had swallowed much water, was quite exhausted.

"Here! Catch hol'!" cried a voice from the shore.

Bob's despairing eyes turned and perceived a long stick within easy reach. He caught it at once.

"Easy now! Easy!" came the same mellow voice—the voice of Moses. "Hol' on tight. Do'n let go. Slowly! slowly! Hol' on tight. Do'n be 'fraid. Ze water, he on'y wet you."

As Moses spoke, he was pulling quietly at the stick. Nearer and nearer came the boy with his unconscious burden. The shore was six yards distant—five yards—four yards——

"I can't hold on any longer," cried the boy.

"Hol' on," cried the ancient, giving the stick a quick, sharp pull which brought the pair in the water within two yards of the bank.

The jerk was too much for the exhausted boy; his hand relaxed, and he and Tom went down.

Then Mose, who dreaded cold water and had not bathed in twenty years on account of his "roomatiz," jumped in, swam towards the two, and becoming once more the Mose of early days, the strongest man from Davenport to Dubuque, caught them in his mighty

arms, and, going down with them, deliberately walked under the water to the bank. Somehow he managed to climb up, assisted it must be said by the cool-headed Iowa Cherub, who, strange to relate, kept his courage and presence of mind to the last.

While Bob, choking, shivering, and coughing, hastened to wrap himself in his blanket, Mose laid Tom Temple face down over a log and used those means best calculated in his judgment to rid a drowning man of water.

"Can I help you?" asked the boy.

"You see dat road?" cried Mose.

"Yes!"

"Run down it till you get to the firs' house, and tell them to tillybone for a doctor."

Then, while the blanketed Cherub, still coughing and spitting, dashed for the road, Mose threw Tom Temple as though he were a sack of wheat over his shoulder and dashed up to his hut. Looking at him then, one would have said that Mose was not more than thirty years of age, and that rheumatism was to him unknown.

When within a surprisingly short time Bob returned with news that the doctor had answered the telephone personally and would start at once, he found Tom Temple lying on the bed well wrapped and perfectly conscious.

"Very good," said Mose, "and Meestaire Temple, he want spik to you."

"Oh, Tom!" exclaimed the boy, catching his friend's hand and blubbering.

The bath and the severe massaging given by Mose had perfectly sobered Tom Temple.

"I'm enough," said Tom bitterly, "to make the angels weep. So, you saved my life! Who knows but you have saved my soul? Bob, I've only one way to show you my gratitude. I love you, my boy, as David loved Jonathan. And because I love you, and because I am grateful, I'm going to show both by the thorny way of renunciation."

"You didn't know what you were doing, Tom," pleaded the boy. "I'm sure you didn't."

"I hope you are right, Bob. But if it were an act of madness, it was madness of my own making. Now, I want to tell you something. On the morning I found you asleep in the forest and smiling like a cherub, I had just spent my last fifty cents on a bottle of whiskey."

"I didn't see any bottle of whiskey about," protested Bob, wondering whether his friend was quite himself.

"I know you didn't. Strong drink has been the curse of my life. It exiled me from home and friends—and"——here Tom's voice quivered——"mother. I left home several weeks

ago to save her good name, and took to the road, hoping that air and exercise and country life would set me up. For over one month I wandered—and then, one dismal stormy day, my taste for liquor came back on me suddenly. For three days I fought it off. On the fourth I gave in. Then I bought the whiskey and set out to bury myself in the woods, there to indulge in a day's debauch. But the sight of you changed all that. You muttered some words in your sleep; I think the words were from the *Salve Regina.* It sounded like—'Turn again thine eyes of pity upon us, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.'"

"Those were from the last prayer little Angela taught me," said Bob.

"I guess the Virgin Mary, clement, loving, and sweet, must have turned her eyes of pity on me, too; for I took that bottle unopened and flung it into the stream, where, as you remember, we breakfasted."

"That," said Bob gravely, "would be just like the Blessed Virgin."

"And your company," continued Tom, "somehow seemed to be an excellent substitute for drink. The craving left me and did not come back till that storm showed you and me what a vile excuse for a man I am. The chill that followed brought the craving back, and

when I drank the liquor my will-power was gone."

"That's funny!" Bob observed, sinking his chin upon his fist in his wonted pose.

"It's not funny; it's tragedy, Bob! Think of my going off and spending *your* money—you poor boy—on a bottle of whiskey. That, I believe, is the most contemptible thing I ever did."

"Forget it, Tom," implored Bob.

"I hope I may forgive myself, but I know I can never forget," cried Tom. "God grant the day may come when I shall be able to make some atonement. Here, Bob, take your money." And Tom, groping under the pillow, produced the roll of bills.

"Indeed, I'll not; you're the treasurer."

"Treasurer no more," answered Tom. "Our goodly fellowship is broken through my most grievous fault. Take it! I insist."

Bob ruefully accepted the money and put it in his pocket with the air of a man swallowing nauseous medicine.

"You say we're partners no more, Tom?"

"I do. I'm not fit to be your companion. Since I cannot trust myself, how can I allow you to trust me. Bob, I'm going to be very ill: I feel it. And the sickness is part punishment of my folly."

"I'll nurse you, Tom," said Bob simply, "day and night."

"No, Bob; you must go your ways."

"Indeed, no. Do you think I'd go back on a friend like you?"

"No, I don't, Bob. I think you are as true and as loyal as any knight of chivalry. The fault is with me. You must leave me; you must go. Promise me—promise me—promise me!" Tom, as he spoke, sat up in bed. His face was flushed with unnatural excitement.

"I can't do it," said Bob.

"Promise me—promise," cried Tom, his excitement growing hysterical.

Bob fell into his familiar pose, chin supported by the right hand, and left hand under the elbow.

"For God's sake," pleaded Tom, clasping his hands together, and turning blazing feverish eyes of entreaty upon the boy, "promise to go your ways and leave me."

"I promise," answered the lad with a break in his voice. He was too frightened to hold out longer.

Tom Temple sank back upon the pillow and began mumbling somewhat incoherently of a winding road, a loitering road, of the litany of the leaves, of the *Salve Regina,* of a cherub

from Iowa. Gradually his voice sank to a whisper, growing softer and softer till it trailed into silence. Tom was unconscious.

It was thus that Doctor Robertson, a tall, clean-limbed, fresh-faced, athletic young man, found him.

The doctor made a brief examination.

"Does he drink?" he inquired.

"Oh, no, doctaire," answered Mose, raising his great forefinger. "I tell you de troot, doctaire; I would not lie to a man who know so moosh as you. He take a glass of sometin' jus' now and den."

"A thimbleful, as you might say," corroborated the old lady with a wave of her pipe.

The doctor looked enquiringly at Bob.

"I'm afraid, sir," said Bob, "that he was once a heavy drinker; but he hasn't been taking anything for a long time; not till to-day. He got a chill in the storm, and became very nervous. Then he began to drink."

"It looks," said the doctor, "like a very serious case. I'm glad I came in my machine. Here you, Mose; have you a good thick blanket?"

"The fines' blanket you ever see," answered Mose.

"And don't you forget to bring it back, doctor," added the old lady as she came forward

with the very blanket which Bob had worn.

"I am going to take this man to the hospital, and hope to save his life," continued the doctor, as he rolled the blanket around the unconscious invalid.

Bob looked as though he were about to weep.

"Don't worry, boy," continued the brisk young physician kindly. "From a cursory examination, added to what you have told me, I feel fairly certain that in drinking as he did to-day your friend was in nowise responsible. His will-power was gone. The circumstances were extraordinary."

"Thank you, sir," said Bob, smiling brightly. "And you'll be sure to tell him that, won't you?"

"I will; and I'll tell him a few other things, too, if I get his case under control."

"How long do you think he'll be in the hospital, doctor?"

"He ought to be himself—if I pull him through—in ten or twelve days."

"And how much will it cost?"

"The hospital? About twenty dollars."

Bob took out his roll of bills and handed a twenty-dollar note to the astonished physician.

"Whose money is this?"

"Eh-eh," stammered Bob, "ours."

"It ain't," said the old lady. "It's the boy's —every cent of it. Tell the truth, Bob."

"We were partners," pleaded the boy.

"And how much money have you?"

"Fifty-nine dollars."

"And he's got to start life on that," put in Mrs. Mose. "He has no home."

"Boy," said the doctor, "when I received my degree for the practice of medicine, the president of St. Louis University, where I'm proud to say I made my course, made us a short address. He said that if we were going out into the world primarily to make money, our medical training had been a failure. 'Let service be your watchword,' he said, with an earnestness I shall never forget. Boy, take back your money."

"I'd like to know that president," said Bob.

"He one dam fine man, dat presiden'!" cried Mose, prayerfully clasping his hands, and raising his eyes to heaven.

"Drop your profanity, you old devil," admonished his wife with an air of superior piety.

"I'm sure the recording angel will thoughtfully fail to enter it in the record of heaven's chancery," said the doctor who was something of a literary man.

"Can't I do anything?" asked Bob, throw-

ing out his arms in a gesture expressive of utter helplessness. "I can't nurse Tom; he made me promise to leave him, and I can't even pay for his care."

"You can help me carry him out to my machine."

"Scoose me, doctaire," said Mose, bowing profoundly, and then, raising his forefinger, and shaking it with each word, he uttered: "I no read nor write; my legs, dey is roomatiz. But—I tell you ze troot—my arm, he strong. I carry ze genteelman to ze machine."

In the final issue, Bob, Mose, and the physician bore him out conjointly, while Mrs. Mose led the procession with something of the air of a drum-major, her pipe doing service as a baton.

Before departing the doctor gave Bob his card and address.

"Come," said Mose gently plucking Bob's sleeve, as the boy gazed wistfully after the receding automobile. "Come wiz me. Stay wiz us so long you like."

"Thank you, Mose," said Bob, shaking the old fellow's hand warmly. "I'll gladly stay the night. But to-morrow I start south."

"I don't see," observed the old lady, "why you don't shake hands with me."

Bob was quick to take the hint.

"And," she continued, "where are you going?"

"South, ma'am."

"And who's going with you?"

"I'm—I'm alone."

Bob was near to breaking down; he had lost his best friend.

"If there isn't an angel or two with you," said the dame, poking the stem of her pipe into Bob's chest, "I'll tear up my Bible and turn Mahometan."

CHAPTER VIII

Bob in trouble returns to Mose, who in a striking way demonstrates that he has not forgotten the Wild West of '49. Canoeing on the Mississippi and farewell to the ancient fisherman.

On the following morning, Bob Ryan, lying behind the stove, which had been curtained off for the occasion, was aroused from sweet slumber by a strange voice outside the hut. He sat up in terror at the first words.

"Look here, old man, I'm an officer of the law."

"Good mornin', Meestaire Officaire," came the voice of Mose.

"Good morning, sir," said his faithful consort. She added casually, "The walking is fine further up the road; and it's nice and cool for a tramp."

"I'm looking for a boy—a man and a boy. If you saw the boy, you would remember him. He has been kidnaped. He is very fat, and has rosy cheeks, and is uncommon good-natured."

"Meestaire officaire, I tell you de troot; I would not lie to you, for you are an officaire. Ze boy and ze man, he was bot' here las' night, an' de man he take seeck, an' de doctaire, Doctaire Robertson, he take him off to de hospital."

"And did the boy go with him?"

"Meestaire officaire, I tell you de troot; I would not lie to you. Ze boy he not go wiz him."

"Well, where's the boy?"

"Meestaire officaire, I tell you a secret."

Bob, at this point, padded over to the bed and got under it. He was frightened.

"Go on; we want those two badly."

"Ze boy, he take de train las' nide for Chicago—de train at 2:15 after midnide."

"Thanks. Good-by. I'll wire Chicago at once and get the man at the hospital afterwards."

"Good-by, officaire."

"Any time you want information," said the venerable lady, "just call in."

There was a few minutes' silence.

"Dang the law!" came Mrs. Mose's voice presently. "Don't tell me that boy has done anything wrong."

"He good boy; so good," observed Moses with much solemnity, "dat I lie for him."

"You needn't boast about your good qualities, sir," returned the wife. "I'd have done the same thing myself. Only, I'd have done it better."

Bob, I am bound to say, was more pleased than edified by this bit of casuistry. So they were on his trail! There was a reason, then, for his father's strange conduct. The officers of the law were after both. How astonished they would be when they attempted to arrest Tom Temple. And how astonishment would seize on Tom on being called to account for ill-doings in a city he had never seen.

He crawled out from under the bed, and, kneeling beside it, said his prayers with unusual fervor. It was bad enough to be alone and abandoned, but to be pursued, to be hounded—was ever a boy of thirteen in sorrier plight!

He arose as the virtuous pair entered.

"Good mornin', Bob," cried the old man. "You sleep well?"

"Good morning, Mose. Good morning, Mrs. Mose. I slept like a top."

"An' you feel fresh?"

"I feel like a bird."

"Say, Bob," said the old lady, "my husband is deef and it takes him an hour to get to the point. Did that Tom Temple kidnap you?"

"What!" cried Bob.

"That's what that bull-necked, pot-bellied, lob-sided officer said," continued the dame.

"He didn't do any such thing," protested Bob warmly.

"Well, they want him for child-stealing."

"That's crazy!" said Bob.

"And they'll be back for you as like as not. Here, boy, you'd better start at once. Take these sandwiches, and eat them as you go."

"I guess you're right," said Bob, receiving from the lady's once fair hands the thoughtful gift. "Good-by; I'm ever so grateful to you."

"I'd like," said the old lady, grasping Bob's hands, her eyes shining with enthusiasm, "to drop that darned officer in the middle of the Mississippi, with an automobile tied to each of his legs."

"Good-by, Mose," continued Bob, at a loss to make appropriate comment in regard to the old lady's devout wish. "Come outside with me, won't you?"

As the two came into the open, Bob drew out his money.

"Say, Mose," he began, "I want you to take five dollars for all you've done for us."

"Bob, you too good; but it is too moosh—the supper, he wort' ten cent, the sandwich, he

wort' five cent, the sleeping by the stove ten cent; ten and ten he is twice ten, and five—he make twenty-five cent."

After some argument, Mose was prevailed upon to take a dollar.

A leisurely young man passing southward along the road, some fifty yards from the hut, paused, watched the two during this transaction, and, unobserved, turned round and retraced his steps.

At last the two parted, and Bob was once more upon the open road. He stepped forward briskly. The morning was cool and bright. Far off, a bob-white was announcing his own name in clear ringing notes. Birds were chattering in the trees that lined his way. For the rest, all was silence. The road about a quarter of a mile from Mose's hut disclosed the end of the forest.

Bob had drawn within a stone's throw of the clearing, when directly in his path there stepped out from the brushwood a young man with a very ill-favored countenance. He had a receding upper lip, large, crooked teeth, and features which were regular only in their brick-dust coloring.

"Good morning, sir," said our startled hero.

"Mornin'. Could you please tell me the time of day?"

"I reckon," said Bob, "that it's about seven."

"What is it by your watch?"

"I have no watch, sir."

Bob, as he answered the man, looked him squarely and enquiringly in the face.

"What kind of a shirt is that you're wearin'?" went on the man, putting his hands upon the boy's bosom.

"I say," protested Bob, "what's the meaning——"

Just then the man's hand darted from Bob's bosom to his trousers pocket, and fastened upon the roll of bills.

It had been the intention of the fellow, who, it is hardly necessary to state, had seen Bob replacing the money after his talk with Mose, to grab the money and run for it. But Bob was too quick for him. Before the robber could remove his hand, Bob caught his arm; whereupon, with his free hand the man struck him a severe blow under the jaw, with the result that the boy was, as the saying goes, "put to sleep." Bob crumpled to the ground.

The man looked at him, spat, pocketed the money, and went his way north. He was satisfied that Bob would not come to for some time.

Now in point of fact, Master Bob, hardened

by his three weeks on the road, regained his consciousness in a surprisingly short period. Had it been a boxing match, he would not have taken the count. He opened his eyes, then, within ten seconds, and found himself so lying that without moving hand or foot, or, indeed, anything but his eyes, he could see the part of the road he had just traversed and the aggressor sauntering along like a gentleman of leisure—as, indeed, he had been all his life.

Bob indulged in a few minutes of watchful waiting; then he rose, stretched himself, and deliberated. Fatherless, friendless a few moments ago, he was now penniless. The situation was discouraging.

Finally, when many precious moments had flown, Bob at a run took to the woods northward, trusting to Providence not to get lost in an attempt at making a short-cut to the home of Mose. His trust was justified.

As he neared Mose's hovel, the old man himself came hastening forward to greet him.

"Bob! You are excite. Wot de mat-taire?"

"I've been robbed."

"Why don't the police—darn 'em—get those robbers instead of running after little boys, drat 'em," cried Mrs. Mose, who had come a close second upon the scene.

"Tell me queek, Bob. Where? When? How? Spik up, boy."

Bob as concisely as possible told the details of his misadventure.

"I see!" said the ancient. "Dat robbaire he no good. He take de candy from de kid. He love drink—he go de road to Clinton. Clinton four miles nort'. He no get to Clinton."

"Darn it," said his lady. "Why don't you go and stop him, instead of standing there and shaking that old finger of yours?"

In response to this adjuration, Mose, with the monosyllable "Wait" upon his lips, suddenly turned and darted behind the hut.

"I thought he had rheumatism," said Bob, staring incredulously at the octogenarian sprinter.

"He has when he's not excited."

"Oh," cried Bob.

"When he gets really worked up," pursued his better half, "he's not near so deef, either."

The old lady was about to furnish another pearl of observation, when Mose, stuffing what looked like a bandanna handkerchief between his rugged bosom and his ancient shirt, reappeared, crying——

"Dis way, Bob, queek," and once more was lost to view behind the hut.

Bob ran at his call and found the youth of eighty-two summers pulling away a long cover of burlap, disclosing in the act as pretty and as graceful a canoe as the lad had ever seen.

"You know how to canoe?" enquired the ancient.

"I've done it before," returned Bob.

"It would be just like you, Mose, to forget them," put in the old lady, coming with alacrity from the house, and bearing two new paddles.

Mose rolled the boat over.

"Now, Bob," he continued, "you catch de sharp end of de boat an' put it under your arm. I catch it at odder end. He easy to carry data-way."

Bob accepted this practical bit of advice, and found that Mose was correct. In a few seconds the canoe was brought to the river; Bob, obeying Mose's gesture, seating himself in the prow. Then Mose, giving the canoe a shove, jumped in lightly.

"Pull, Bob, pull, pull," cried the old man. "I steer. The rivaire he have current one place, no current anudder. I know."

Bob was by no means unskilled with the paddle. His stroke was quick and strong; but it was nothing to the stroke of the old waterman. In a few minutes, through quiet

waters girding the shore, they were speeding up the river.

"Dis canoe," said the old man, as he bent his back to each stroke, "he no mine. He belong to a fine genteelman who have no boat-house. He ask me to watch it for him. To-day the firs' time I use it myselv."

Fortunately the wind was in their favor, and the current, due to Mose's accurate knowledge of the river, on which in the olden days he had been a raftsman, was skilfully avoided. The boat was dancing over the water at a rate that Bob could scarcely credit.

"What are you going to do, Mose?"

"De road, he very winding; our boat he go straight," explained Mose, after he had made Bob repeat his question three times. "We go faster twice as he. We catch up."

"And when we do, what then?"

"Pull! pull hard, Bob," was the only answer.

Gradually the exhilaration of morning air and swift motion and rippling water began to lose its edge. Bob breathed harder and harder. The sweat stood upon his face, rolled into his eyes, trickled down his nose. His arms under the strain grew weary. Bob was on the point of giving out. He breathed a prayer and mastered with difficulty the almost overpowering impulse to rest. The old stager

behind was striking the water, meanwhile, as surely, as steadily, as easily, as though he had just started.

Suddenly, impelled by the deft touch of the steersman, the canoe shot towards the shore, a clean, dry beach, upon which it slipped until, when it rested, only that part in which Mose sat remained in the water.

"Follow me, Bob," continued Mose, dropping his paddle and leaping from the boat.

Leading the way, Mose, with the quickness of a small boy, trotted up the bank, until he reached a grove. Here, followed by the amazed Bob, he proceeded more cautiously.

"Do ze way I do," he whispered.

Bending low, he moved from tree to tree, until they reached a thick growth of shrubbery.

"Bob," he said, "you creep in dere, and go on till you come in sight of de road. You kip quiet an' watch for de tief. When you see him come, you move de bushes and I understan'."

Bob obeyed. As Mose had said, the heavy undergrowth extended as far as the road. The boy began to wonder what would happen next. Could Mose, an octogenarian, dare face a husky young robber in the flower of youth? Would the robber stick to the road? Had he not possibly passed this spot already? And if he did come, what could be expected of

a boy of thirteen? The minutes went by very slowly, so slowly that Bob fancied he must have been crouching in the bushes a full hour. In point of fact, not quite fifteen minutes had elapsed, when, far down the road came the cheerful whistling of a rag-time, done with more accuracy of movement than of melody. The tune presently ceased. Then there came a loud raucous "Whoopee!"

"That's his voice sure enough," said the boy to himself. He turned his head slightly with the intention of giving the signal, when, in the act, a vision fell upon his eyes which almost forced him to express his wonderment in a loud exclamation. Right behind him, crouched as though about to spring, stooped the ancient, done up so that his own mother would not have known him.

His hat was gone; in its stead, a flaming red bandanna which came down to his eyes; beneath this a yellow bandanna which left only his mouth and nose exposed. Around the shirt were two more bandannas; around each leg, two more. Most impressive of all, in the old gentleman's steady though wrinkled right hand was a huge revolver of the days of forty-nine.

"Don' move," whispered the apparition, putting the finger of his left hand to his lips,

while, as he spoke, there came upon the quiet air another triumphant "Whoopee!"

In spite of the dramatic possibilities, Bob could not refrain from grinning and wishing that Tom Temple were present. How Tom would appreciate the whole affair.

His reflections were broken by the appearance, some distance down the road, of the jolly robber. He was walking slowly and gesticulating to some invisible audience.

"Step right up, fellers," he suddenly broke out, "the drinks are on me. Set 'em up, Bill; beers all around."

The man raised his hand, threw back his throat, and dashed down an imaginary stein.

"Who says another?" he continued, advancing a few steps. "I ain't no Morgan, but I've got the price of another round, and then some. Come on, boys, once more!"

Just then Mose sprang out directly in front of the monologist, and, covering him with the ancient weapon, cried in low, fierce tones:

"Han's up!"

The obedience was of the kind expected in religious houses. Up went the fellow's hands, while his eyes looked as though they were going to pop out, and the color flew from his face.

"You move, I shoot," growled Mose, plant-

ing the muzzle of his pistol against the man's chest and passing his left hand quickly over each and every pocket. It was the work of hardly more than five seconds to discover the roll of bills and extract it.

"Now run, run, run!"

There was another exhibition of religious obedience. The man tore northwards up the road. Slipping the revolver into his pocket, Mose brought out from the same receptacle a dry piece of wood, which he broke sharply across one of his rheumatic knees. As a result there was a sound as of a rifle shot, coincidentally with which came a shriek of terror from the fugitive, who leaped into the air, and then broke into a burst of speed which in a few seconds carried him out of sight.

"Dat pistole," explained Mose, rapidly removing the handkerchiefs, "he no shoot. But he look good. Here, Bob, put your money away. We mus' hurry."

"I say, Mose," Bob enquired, seated in the canoe, as the old man with a shove jumped in and assumed his paddle, "what put it into your head to play a Wild-West hold-up?"

"No," answered Mose, "we can't hold up now. And we do not go west. We go south, down ze rivaire. You res', and I myselve paddle alone."

The ancient, turning sharply into the current and paddling with a long sweep, sent the canoe spinning down-stream at a rate which was a revelation to Master Bob.

"But why," roared Bob, after waiting a few minutes, till, as he judged, they were far enough down-stream to be out of earshot, "did you come to think of holding that fellow up the way they used to hold up stage-coaches?"

"Bob, I tell you de troot. I do not lie to you—nevaire. I good Cat'lic. Sixty year ago, I drive a stage-coach. I bin hold-up myselve."

Mose, it may be added, told the truth; but not all the truth. There was a time when his religion fitted him so loosely that for years he went without it.

"I'm awfully obliged to you, Mose," continued Bob earnestly. "You've been a true friend to me, and I'll never forget you as long as I live. Every day I'll pray for you."

"I want no pay," returned the canoeist. "You my frien'. I am honaire to help you, Bob."

"Well," said Bob, "if I can ever do you a favor, you can count on me."

"No, Bob," said Mose, whose activity with the oar made it difficult for him to catch the

words clearly, "I don' know how to count ver' well. I know nuttin'. I tell you wot, I cannot read nor write."

Here the healthy victim of illiteracy, suspending a stroke, waved his paddle towards the shore. They were passing swiftly Mose's hut. The old lady, dressed, it may be presumed, for Bob's especial benefit in her gayest attire, a black silk dress with a hooded cloak which, combined with her strong features and her pronounced stoop, gave her the appearance of Mother Goose, was standing on the bank, wildly waving her pipe. On catching Bob's eyes, she smiled and dropped a curtsy such as is nowadays seen only in the revival of the minuet.

"Aren't you going to land?" asked Bob, after returning the good woman's ceremonial greeting with much waving of arms and a bow which almost capsized the canoe.

"I tell you wot, Bob. It is not safe to land here. We go down the rivaire one hour more. We stop near a leetle village. I lan' you there. Then, you safe."

"What does your wife do all day?"

"My knife?" queried the ancient.

"Your wife?" roared Bob.

"He cook, he smoke, he clean up de house. And very often, by the hour he sit and think."

Mose paused, then added: "Sometime my wive, he only sit."

Bob's laugh startled an echo.

"Yes," said Mose; "he ver' funny woman. My wive, he know wot he want, and he always get it."

Mose then proceeded to give Bob good advice. He told the attentive youth to keep away from gambling dens, never to drink whiskey raw, and to avoid policemen. When Bob had explained that he had avoided all these from babyhood, his mentor took up a higher theme. He warned Bob earnestly to be sure to go to Mass every Christmas.

"Every Christmas!" cried Bob.

"Yes, Bob; me, I go to Mass reg'lar eve'y Christmas. I tell you de troot, I have not missed in twenty year. I good Cat'lic."

"Good heavens, Mose! don't you go to Mass every Sunday?"

"Me!" exclaimed the ancient. "I am ver' good Cat'lic; but I tell you de troot, Bob; I no devote—no saint."

"But you ought to go every Sunday," said Bob. "The Church requires you to go."

"He does?" said Mose, ceasing to canoe.

"Why certainly."

"I don' know nuttin', Bob. When I was leetle boy, dere was no schools."

Bob now resumed his paddling, and, as they sped southwards, began to think. Here was a good simple man—good, in spite of years of rough life and bad company; yet ignorant of the first principles of that Church which he really loved. Had Bob only known of him by hearsay, he would, in all likelihood, have set him down contemptuously as a bad Catholic, a disgrace to the great Church which mothered him. And yet, it seemed to Bob the old man was simply ignorant of his religion.

"I shouldn't be surprised," mused Bob, "if this part of America were full of just such men as Mose; good, earnest men, only ignorant, and therefore dropping away from the true Church."

Bob was correct in his opinion. The fields are still white for the harvest; the laborers still too few.

The upshot of the boy's reflections was that he induced Mose to land on an uninhabited island in midstream, far from noise and disturbance, where for more than an hour he explained, according to his lights, some of the more important teachings of the Catholic Church. The ancient did incline to Bob's words a most attentive and delighted ear. Frequently, he burst into exclamations of wonder.

"Jes' tink," he would say, holding up his forefinger. "I eighty-two year old, and I never hear dat before. My wive, I tell him. Tell me more, Bob."

And Bob talked, and yelled, and gesticulated till he almost lost his voice. Before the conference came to an end, Mose, rolling his expressive eyes to heaven and holding up his great forefinger, vowed and protested that he would go to Mass every Sunday, eat no meat on Friday, and, most important of all, would wait upon the priest of the nearest parish and receive instructions in preparation for his first Confession and his first Communion. His gratitude to Bob was touching; to the sophisticated, it would have seemed an exaggeration.

The two, Mose in a state of exaltation, Bob, exhausted but glowing with the sense of a glorious hour, resumed their trip. The sun was directly above their heads, when Mose steered to shore.

"Good-by, Mose," said Bob. "It's hard to leave you. And give this to your good wife."

Unbuttoning his shirt at the throat, Bob took from about his neck a tiny chain with a small gold medal, encased in glass.

"That's one of the things I love most," said Bob. "Little Angela gave it to me. She gave it to me just a day before I left. She's

going to die soon, and she's waiting to die. Mose, I think she knew I was going. She's a saint."

Mose took the medal and chain, and, an unusual thing for him, was at a loss for words.

"Good-by, Mose," continued the boy, wringing the ancient hand. The wring was returned with interest. Bob feared that some of his bones were about to crack.

"Bob, I tell you de troot; I nevaire, nevaire forget you. Summer he go, winter he come—he be all same, I nevaire forget. And my wive, when he see dis chain and dis medal, he nevaire forget. Good-by."

Here Mose, his eyes swimming, although there was a smile upon his lips, caught the boy's hand and gave it another squeeze, which Bob, because he was a hero, was just able to endure without crying out.

Then Mose entered the canoe. Raising his paddle and holding it in midair, he made one more speech.

"Bob, I want to tell you somet'ing. If evaire you need a home, a meal, a bed, or a *servant*—I tell de troot, I lie not—come wiz me."

His paddle was about to fall, when Bob shouted:

"Hold on, Mose." Then Bob jumped into the canoe and shook hands once more.

"I'd like to stay with you," he said. "Indeed I would, if I thought I'd be safe. Now, Mose, shake hands for the last time."

And "crabbed age and youth" parted with wet eyes.

CHAPTER IX

Bob at the Blue Bird Inn. He meets a jolly host and a kindly hostess, buys The Wanderer, and meets one of the important characters of the story.

Bob was presently going southward on a wide and shady road. Once more he was alone, once more without friends. It is true he possessed what seemed to him a small fortune in cash. He took out his roll of money, seeking shelter first behind a huge oak tree, and counted it. He had started his new life with fifty dollars; he was now owner of sixty-three. And yet, strange as it may seem, the ownership of this sum was just then a cause rather of worry than of comfort. The world was full of highwaymen. There were scoundrels who would cut a man's throat for a dollar bill. Moreover, a boy with so much money on his person was likely to arouse suspicion. Bob with a sigh restored his money to his pocket. Without knowing it he was suffering on a small scale the pains and anxieties of the millionaire.

It was much past twelve by this time, and

the weather was growing warmer with each hour. The boy was beginning to feel weak and hungry. As he walked briskly on, he strained his eyes for sight of some house. Within a few minutes his gaze was rewarded. Standing back from the road, with three noble elm trees fronting it, stood a quaint, pleasant-looking building over the door-post of which swung a sign with the words, "The Blue Bird Inn."

Before entering, Bob made a reconnaissance. There was a bar to the left of the entrance. On the other side were several tables, all empty save one, at which sat a youth of about seventeen and three men of various ages. Behind the bar stood a jolly-faced personage busily engaged in mopping the counter, apparently the owner of the place. He was fat, too; built much upon the proportions of our hungry hero. As Bob gazed, this pleasant specimen of humanity raised his eyes and perceived the youthful tramp. His smile grew deeper and he bestowed upon Bob a cheering nod. That settled it: Bob entered.

"Good morning, son," said mine host. "Do you want to buy this place?"

"No, thank you," answered Bob, grinning, "but I'd like to know whether I could buy a meal here; I'm tired and hungry."

"You're in the right church and the right pew, too," answered mine host. "I can give you an ordinary dinner for thirty-five cents, or a chicken dinner for seventy."

"A chicken dinner!" echoed Bob.

"I don't want to boast," said the man, "but I've got a wife who can fry a chicken that an angel wouldn't balk at eating."

"Here," thought Bob, "is a chance to get rid of some of my money."

Bob was already ceasing to worry after the manner of millionaires.

"I'll take a chicken dinner, thank you," he said.

"Very good; you'll never regret it. Hey, wife!" cried the man, opening a door behind the bar, and speaking in a louder key, "a chicken dinner for one, with extra trimmings. Now, my boy, just let me fix you up a little bit." Saying which, he dived beneath the counter, came up with a clothes brush and, making his way to Bob, proceeded to dust him, giving forth with each sweep of the brush the peculiar, traditional hissing sound which all hostlers employ in currying horses.

"Say," said Bob expansively, "you are awfully good."

"I wish you'd tell my wife that," retorted the jolly host, turning Bob round and round

and surveying the dusted youth with growing admiration. "Sometimes I don't think she appreciates me as much as I'd like her to."

"I'll bet she does appreciate you," said Bob.

Mine host winked and chuckled.

"We're a mutual admiration society," he whispered. "Now, boy, don't you want a wash?"

"Thank you; I surely do."

The innkeeper led the smiling lad, who was wonderfully quick to react to kindness, into a small compartment.

"There you are," he said; "soap, towels, bath, hot and cold water—all at your service."

"Gee!" said Bob, "I'd like to be an innkeeper like you!"

The man departed, leaving in his path a trail of laughter.

Fifteen minutes later, Bob, rosy, clean, refreshed and hungry, came from the bathroom just as a smiling, brisk woman was setting upon a table a dinner which to his hungry eyes could not be surpassed. Saying hurriedly his grace before meals, the boy bowed to the woman and seated himself.

"Why, husband," said the wife, "why didn't you tell me it was a boy—a real boy,"—here she paused to glance with favoring eyes at Bob,

who was very actively employed,—"with a real appetite?"

"Isn't that dinner of yours good enough for anybody?" countered the host.

"It's good enough for most people," returned the kindly woman.

"And I assure you, ma'am," volunteered Bob gratefully, "that it's good enough for me. It's as fine a meal as any boy could want."

"Go about your business, husband. I'll wait on this boy myself."

By many questions the woman succeeded in learning that Bob liked pie, that he could enjoy a plate of ice-cream, and that he was fond of cherries. Rejoicing, she departed to secure these and other extras.

Left to himself, Bob's attention was attracted to a conversation between the youth and one of the three men at the table beside him.

"I'll tell you what, young feller," said the man, apparently a well-to-do farmer, "I'll give you forty dollars for your boat."

"I need fifty," said the boy, taking from his mouth a cigarette and lighting a fresh one from the first. His forefinger and thumb were yellow with the stain of nicotine.

"Forty is all I can spare," said the first speaker.

"I paid one hundred for the boat three months ago, and I've come all the way from Minneapolis in it. The boat was considered a bargain at the price I gave for it. If I weren't strapped, I wouldn't sell it for a hundred and twenty."

Bob continued to eat, the two to talk. They were still arguing about the matter when he arose from the table.

"I say, mister," he whispered to mine host as he paid for his meal, "do you know anything about that boat the young man over there wants to sell?"

"Quite a good deal. It's a fine motor-boat with a three horse-power engine in good condition. The boat will carry six or seven and is good for from six to eight miles an hour."

"Is it worth fifty dollars?"

"Double that price at least; but the boy, who has wealthy parents, doesn't care one way or another about its value provided he can get enough money to pay his bills here and elsewhere and purchase his railroad fare home. Why, are you thinking of buying a boat?"

"I didn't think of it till this morning," Bob made answer. "When I was canoeing downstream a couple of hours ago, it struck me what a fine thing it would be to travel by water in-

stead of tramping along all sorts of roads and meeting all sorts of people."

"Are you going far down the river?" pursued the innkeeper.

"I—I—really don't know," said Bob. "I think I am. Anyhow, whether I go far or not, I can find plenty of use for the boat. Of course, fifty dollars is a mighty large amount to me."

"But, my boy, did it occur to you that you can get your money back almost any time you want to sell it, provided you take care of your engine and keep the boat in good condition?"

"That's so," said Bob. "I believe I'll buy it."

"Hey, Earl Berter," called the innkeeper, "come over here."

The young boat owner approached slouchingly.

"Would you mind showing your boat to this boy?" pursued the host.

"What! do you want to buy?" gasped the youth.

"If I like the boat, I may."

"But you can't have it for one penny less than fifty dollars."

"I heard you saying that while I was eating."

"And I want cash."

"I understand."

"All right, then, come along."

"Hold on," broke in the host, "I'll go along with you, boy.—Hey, wife,—hey——"

"What is it, dear?" answered the woman, emerging promptly from the kitchen.

"Our little friend here is about to invest in that boat; and as he's doing it mainly on my advice, I want to go with him and see him through. Would you mind taking my place here for a few minutes?"

"Provided," answered the wife, "that you come back after the sale and give me a chance to see what my new friend has bought."

It was a short walk to the river. Tied to a willow was a trim boat, fresh-painted and, to the casual eye, in perfect order.

"It looks fine," said Bob with enthusiasm.

"It looks that way because it is," returned the owner. "There's an oar for poling and a fine camping bed, and a rubber cover for the boat."

"Do those things go with the boat for the price?"

"You may have them all. Do you know how to run a motor?"

"I think I do," said Bob, stepping into the boat and seating himself beside the wheel.

Then Bob began examining the locker be-

neath the central seat, taking out the various tools and handling them with a practised hand. From these he went to the motor itself.

"I see," said Berter, "that you need no instructions."

"Step in, both of you," said Bob, "and we'll take a short run."

"Why," gasped Berter as he watched Bob start the engine, "you know more about this boat than I do!"

"I ran one just like this for a month at—well, somewhere else. Your engine is all right. I think I can get eleven or twelve miles an hour out of it down-stream; that bed suits me too. And the boat seems——"

"I can tell you about the boat," interrupted the innkeeper. "I've done some carpentering in my day. It's strongly built, on graceful lines, and is practically as good to-day as when it was built."

"And it sold," added Berter, "when it was built, at one hundred and seventy-five dollars. It is named *The Wanderer.*"

"I like that name," said Bob. "It suits me. I am a wanderer myself. Honestly," he went on, as he steered the boat neatly to the shore, "I think it's too cheap at fifty."

"I know it is," said the owner; "but I'm homesick. I started out thinking I could earn

my own living, and the painter who promised me a good job down below here fooled me. I don't like to write home for help; and I'll be glad to *give* you the boat, if you'll let me have the fifty."

"Thank you," said Bob. "Here's your money. And now as I have only twelve dollars and thirty cents left, I'll not be so much afraid of being robbed."

Young Mr. Berter, hastily lighting a cigarette, accepted the money cheerfully.

"Now let me show you something, Johnnie," he said. "You see that locker under the stern?"

"Yes."

"Well, here are two keys; one for the outer and one, this skeleton key, for the inner compartment; and in that you can keep all your money and valuables. I had it put in purposely."

"I feel like a robber," said Bob.

"You're in luck, that's all," corrected the innkeeper. "And somehow I think you're getting what's coming to you. Here, Earl Berter, you come along with me while the wanderer is examining *The Wanderer,* and you wait here, boy, for my wife. Good-by. Any time you're around, call in. My house is yours."

And now Bob Ryan, the actual owner of a fine motor-boat, left to himself, was as happy as the happiest child on Christmas morning. He tried the keys, put away in the secret receptacle ten dollars, and hopped gaily from one part to another of *The Wanderer,* discovering at every instant new perfections.

"Luck!" he cried. "Luck! It's more than that. It's a blessing. Somebody's praying for me." And once more he fell to a minute examination of the machine. His studies were interrupted by the arrival of the innkeeper's wife. She was not alone. At her side bounded a splendid young dog, behind her came a man bearing in each hand two plethoric hampers.

"Oh, George," cried Bob, "what a dog!" Here he flicked his fingers, and uttered a soft, clear sound; whereupon with an eager whine the dog leaped into the boat and laid his noble head upon Bob's knees.

"Man and beast take to you alike," said the woman.

Bob interrupted his caresses to greet the innkeeper's wife.

"Here, Jack," she said, after returning Bob's hearty salutations, "put those hampers aboard."

"Why, what's all that?" said the boy.

"Provisions," she answered. "I've put in a stock for you that ought to last for five or six days."

"Oh, I say, ma'am," said Bob, as the man laid them in the prow, "this is too much!"

"For one meal, yes," smiled the woman.

"If kindness could kill, I'd be dead and buried," said the boy.

"And if a good heart were wealth," she replied, "you'd be rolling in gold and buying up railroads."

"This world is full of nice people," said Bob, with that smile of his which at once revealed and won so much kindness.

"Do you care for reading, boy?"

"Call me Bob—Bob Ryan, please. I should say I do," he answered, caressing the dog, which was now resting peacefully, crouched at his feet.

"Say, Jack," she said to her attendant, "run up to the library case in my room and take out all the books on the top shelf, and bring 'em here. And, by the way, Bob, are you well supplied with gasoline?"

"I've enough for a day, I think."

"Have you room for more?"

"I've room for three gallons."

"And, Jack," she shouted, bringing the man to a stop, "fetch three gallons of gasoline."

Bob blushed and gasped. What had he done to gain all this kindness?

"I had a boy once," said the woman, as though answering his thought. "Had he grown up, he'd be just such a boy as you, I think; he was so like his father—stout, ruddy, cheerful, brimming over with kindness. God took him just as he was nearing his ninth year."

"I'll bet he's an angel now," said Bob, his intonation rich in sympathy.

"And his sister, two years younger," she went on, "was carried off by the same sickness. Whenever I meet a little boy or girl who seems to need help, I feel that my own little ones are near me and whispering to me to do them every kindness I can. Since I saw you, Bob, a far stronger feeling than I ever had before came upon me. My little children," she added, "are with me now. I'm sure of it. And, Bob, they love you."

"Say, come on in this boat; we'll take a little ride while we're waiting for that man to come back. Let's talk it over."

"Tell me about yourself," the woman said as she stepped into *The Wanderer*.

The motor rumbled, they shot out into the shimmering river, and Bob, with such reservations as he thought himself bound to make by his promise, told his strange and unusual tale.

"And what do you want to do, Bob?"

"I've got two things on my mind," he answered. "I want to find out why my father acted so strangely; but that question will have to wait for one whole year. In the next place, I want to go back to school—to a Catholic school, and finish at least the eighth grade."

"But where?"

"That's the funny part of it. I haven't the least idea. My father wants me to go south, and I'm obeying him. It is getting toward the end of July, and I have at least six weeks to make up my mind. I pray to do what's right, and I'm sure that a lot of my friends in Dubuque are praying for me. People say I'm lucky; it's not luck at all."

"But, my dear boy, how are you going to meet expenses?"

"First," answered Bob, "I'm going to sell this boat when I get my price, and then I intend to work and save. I'm pretty strong. Then there's another thing; I reckon I can get some sort of work out of school hours to help pay my expenses."

"You certainly have courage, Bob. Now I want you to promise me something."

"I'll promise you anything, ma'am."

"It's this: If you are ever in trouble or in need, and you think I can help you, I want

you to write to me at once. Here's my card."

Bob glanced at it and read the name of Mrs. John Symmes, with the rural delivery address appended.

"I'll write to you, anyhow, Mrs. Symmes," he said as he carefully put the card in his pocketbook. "And I'll never forget you even if I live to be twice as old as my good friend, Mose."

"And if ever you want a home," added Mrs. Symmes, "come to us."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Bob wistfully, "I've never had a *real* home—no mother, you know—and it's hard."

Here the dog, which had been intently watching the boy's face, jumped up, planted his forefeet on Bob's knees, and uttered a low whine.

"There's a sympathetic dog for you," cried the boy, putting an arm about the animal's neck. "Do you know what he said? I do. He said, 'Don't feel bad, little boy; I'm your friend.'"

Mrs. Symmes laughed.

"There's Jack," she said, "and he's got Dickens' best novels and a book of select poetry for boys and girls."

"How can I ever thank you, Mrs. Symmes?" cried Bob as he turned the boat shorewards.

"By remembering me and my husband and praying for us both."

"I wish it were something harder, Mrs. Symmes.—Oh, these are fine books! I can read them even when I am running this engine, which really needs no care."

Jack, a country youth, who, too bashful to talk, had contented himself with grinning at Bob whenever he was in sight of him, here mustered up courage and said:

"I hope you'll have a lot of fun with that boat," with which he blushed under his tan, and took to his heels.

"Well, good-by, Bob," said Mrs. Symmes. "And may God bless you, and may my two dear little ones watch over you. I'm not a Catholic, Bob, but I know you'll be glad to hear that I allowed both of them to be baptized by Father Ronald, a dear friend of my husband's, before they died."

"They are certainly in heaven," cried Bob, "and I hope you'll allow Father Ronald to baptize you, too, and your husband. I'm awfully glad to hear that. I just hate to say good-by!"

Bob held out his hand; she took it, wrung it with a fervor little less than his own, then threw her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"I'm coming back some day," said Bob, get-

ting into the boat. "Gee, but it makes me lonesome to leave you and your husband! Well, good-by. Here, dog, jump out!"

"Come here, Hobo," called the woman.

For answer Hobo leaped into the prow of the boat and, hiding himself behind the portly lad, emitted a low whine.

"Do you like dogs, Bob?" asked Mrs. Symmes.

"Like 'em! How can I help it? They like me. And it isn't," continued Bob, smiling as he got off his favorite joke, "because they take me for a bone, either. Here, Hobo," he continued, turning to the dog and holding up a warning finger, "you get right out."

With head low, trailing tail and funereal gait, the dog made the length of the boat, stepped out gingerly, and facing Bob, raised his head to heaven and broke into a weird howl of grief.

"Take the dog; he wants you," said Mrs. Symmes. "It's most extraordinary that he should take to you the way he does. Call him."

"It's too much, ma'am. I can't do it."

"Who knows," pursued Mrs. Symmes, "but you may need him? Why, my poor Bob, how selfish I've been! Here you are going alone into the world. That dog will be your friend

and companion—possibly your protector. He wants to adopt you. Call him; I insist."

"Here, Hobo!" cried Bob, clicking his tongue.

With yelps of delight, Hobo lifted his head, set his tail proudly to the breeze, and with three leaps was upon Bob, who, unprepared for so impetuous a greeting, fell over on his back. He picked himself up laughing, and started the motor.

"Good-by! good-by! May we meet again," he shouted, still laughing.

The dog, facing his former mistress, barked loud and long. He, too, was bidding farewell. Mrs. Symmes, brave and smiling, but uttering no word, stood facing them, waving her handkerchief. She did not see them out of sight; for, turning presently, she walked away bravely with shining eyes.

CHAPTER X

The Wanderer wanders for a fortnight, till it brings Bob to the hospitable shores of a family so delightful that he is constrained to stay over night.

For the following two weeks Bob led an idyllic life. Hobo, quick to learn, eager to please, kept time from hanging heavily on the boy's hands. The dog, naturally at home in the water, came, under Bob's careful training, to be an expert swimmer and to perform aquatic feats which few dogs, however good at swimming, dared attempt. Not content with teaching Hobo to go after sticks, Bob trained him to bring all manner of large objects from the water. Many a swim the two took together. It was easy to bring the dog to ride through the water, his forepaws perched on Bob's shoulders; but it was a work of patience and of many hours to get Hobo to carry his master in somewhat the same fashion.

Bob had no trouble in guarding his boat. He could land anywhere and, making a sign to Hobo, go his way to village or town, con-

fident that on his return he would find the faithful animal at attention in front of the boat, ready to face all comers to the death.

At night, Bob, arranging his bed in the boat, would lie down peacefully, beside him the dog resting on his haunches and turning his eyes hither and thither in a watchfulness that knew no flagging. So far as Bob, a very heavy sleeper, knew, Hobo watched all night.

It was in the quiet of the day and of the river that Hobo, his head at his master's feet, calmly rested; and it was then, too, that Bob entered into that fairyland of warm-hearted and imaginative youth, the land created by the genius of Charles Dickens.

As luck would have it, Bob introduced himself to this enchanted realm of fancy by way of the Pickwick Papers. The first chapter he found rather dull; the following, hardly less so. Nevertheless Bob read on. It was a tribute of his love to Mrs. Symmes that he should show his appreciation of her gift by reading the books she had given him. His gratitude presently came by its reward. The entrance of the *Fat Boy* upon the scene—a Fat Boy, be it said, in nowise like himself—roused Bob's sense of humor. For the first time since opening the pages, Bob laughed. Then Hobo jumped up and looked with eager, inquiring, almost

alarmed eyes upon the youth whom he adored. Bob laughed again. Hobo didn't understand it. He kept awake and at attention till the laughter ceased, and resumed his broken nap. Once Bob came to realize that the Pickwick Papers was a funny book he began to see jokes where jokes were intended, and his chuckles became more frequent. In due course of time it dawned upon Hobo that laughing was not a symptom of some dread disease, but a something which made Bob Ryan feel good. Awakened by those breaks of merriment he would rise, frisk about, offer the congratulatory paw to be shaken, then fall to sleeping with the heavenly feeling that his master was happy.

Among the effects left by the late master of *The Wanderer* was a good outfit of fishing tackle. On their second day down the river, Bob, choosing an inviting nook, threw out a tentative line. In an hour's time he secured a string of fish—mostly roach and channel cat—which, he calculated, would be enough to satisfy the hunger of several large families.

At noontime he made for a shady grove, built a fire, and treated himself—not forgetting the dog—to a fish dinner. While he was eating it a native came up, entered into conver-

sation, and finally bought what was left of the fish for one dollar and ten cents.

That settled it; Bob became a fisherman. Each morning at early dawn he chose his place, showing rare judgment in his choice. Before most people were stirring Bob had his string of fish ready for the market; and his treasury began to grow at the rate of about one dollar a day.

Nor was Hobo his only companion during these halcyon weeks. Here and there along the river, especially on the hotter days, Bob came upon parties of little children bathing and splashing in the water; on which occasions he was wont to bring his boat to a stop alongside, and, with his winning smile and hearty voice, invite all who desired to take a ride. Even the most timid child felt no fear of the jolly youth, and his boat was almost invariably filled with eager and laughing children. While Bob steered the boat and beamed upon all in sheer joy of their enjoyment, the delighted Hobo, who quickly caught his master's attitude toward children, would go from one to the other, gravely and earnestly offering the paw of friendship. Hobo became as popular as his master.

Not infrequently did our hero, on landing

his boat-load, condescend to don his swimming suit and join the youngsters in their water frolics. Hobo, of course, followed his master. Sometimes Bob found it hard to get away from his new friends.

One day—to be precise, two weeks after the purchase of *The Wanderer*—about two o'clock in the afternoon, having just disposed of an unusually heavy string of fish, Bob came upon a very interesting party of children. There were five in all—two girls and three boys, and, as he presently found out, they were brothers and sisters. They were diving from a large dock projecting into the river, behind which was an elaborate bathing-house.

"Good afternoon," he said with his usual cordiality. "Do you folks care about taking a little ride?"

"Oh, I should just love it!" said the older girl.

"And so should I," said a boy of fourteen, the oldest of the children, "but I think we ought to ask mama's permission first, Alice."

"That's so, Tom; I forgot," said Alice.

"And I'm going to get it," said the boy next in age, who was already out of the water and racing up the bank toward a pretty cottage.

Meanwhile the four remaining children drew close to the boat, whereupon Hobo gravely,

almost religiously, shook hands with each, having done which he turned his beautiful brown eyes upon his master and, seeing the sheer delight in his face, proceeded to do it all over again.

The enraptured children were unusually refined. Tom, the eldest, having learned Bob's name, introduced him to each and every one. He complimented him upon *The Wanderer,* upon Hobo, and in a short space said so many pleasant things that Bob was presently quite in love with him. Alice was even more enthusiastic.

"Bob," she said, "if you don't mind, I'll ask mama and papa for you to be our guest at supper. Won't you stay?"

"I'm afraid Hobo wouldn't like it," returned Bob playfully. "Would you, Hobo?"

The dog barked sharply thrice.

"Hobo says," translated Bob, "that he is ever so much obliged to you, but that he is a natural-born wanderer and he prefers to go down the river."

"Did he say all that in three barks?" cried Alice.

"He can say a lot more in one bark, if he wants to," answered Bob, laughing.

"Say! Say!" cried a voice from the land.

"Well, say it, Joe," cried Tom.

"Can't you let me get my breath?" returned Joe, who had run all the way back at top speed. "Ma says it's all right and you are very kind, and she is ever so much obliged to you, and please not to go far away and not to stay out more than ten or fifteen minutes."

With whoops and hurrahs the five youthful bathers jumped into *The Wanderer,* the smallest child, Anita, aged seven, nestling up close to the master of the boat. Hobo conscientiously made his way over to Joe and held up the paw of friendship.

"Joe," said Tom, "that dog's given you a lesson in manners."

"So he has," piped Joe. "Excuse me," he continued, holding out his hand to Bob, "my name is Joe Reade, and I'm awfully glad to make your acquaintance."

Bob was, to borrow the expression of his favorite author, "one vast substantial smile." On such occasions he was a boy of few words; and yet those with him grew to love him, won by the very eloquence of his silence.

"Bob," whispered little Anita, "I like you."

"Same here," returned Bob; "I like *you.*"

"I wish you'd stay for supper," she added.

"I would in a minute," said Bob, "only Hobo objects!"

Then everybody began to talk to Bob, whose

answers were mainly smiles of different degrees of intensity. The happiness of the party was nothing marred by the baby quarrel which presently broke out between Anita and her brother Pierre, aged nine. He wanted the place next Bob; and he went after it, little-boy fashion, by shoving Anita aside and slipping into the seat. Anita was near to tears. She told Pierre in the simple vocabulary at her command what she thought of him, and insisted upon his restoring at once her particular "place in the sun"; but Pierre, old enough to realize that possession is nine points of the law, refused to budge. Passion, on both sides, was mounting high. Something dreadful was about to happen.

"Now, Pierre, don't forget yourself," warned Tom.

"Anita," counseled Alice, "count ten."

Hobo, at this juncture, jumped between the two contending powers and gazed with anxious and pleading eyes from one to the other.

And then with one arm Bob reached forth and lifted the raging Anita to his knees while the other curled protectingly about the impenitent invader of her rights.

"Now!" cried Anita triumphantly.

"Tell her you're sorry, Pierre," whispered Bob.

"Anita, I'm sorry; and I won't never do it no more."

Whereupon, from her throne on high, Anita leaned down and kissed her offending brother.

" 'Oh, blessings on the falling out,' " quoted Tom,

" 'Which all the more endears,
When we fall out with those we love
And kiss again with tears.' "

"Do you like poetry?" asked Bob, looking with fresh interest at the big brother.

"I should say I do. I go to Campion College, and Father Dalton, who's a poet, is a great friend of mine. He taught me to love poetry, though I'm not studying it yet."

"That's strange," said Bob. "I was thrown in with the nicest man you ever saw for almost two weeks, and he taught me to love poetry, too. I've got a book full of poems which a lady gave me, and I read some every day."

"Cæsar!" ejaculated Tom, "how I wish you were with me at Campion."

With a smile for answer, Bob landed them at their swimming place. They all in turn shook his hand, and each made a pretty speech. They were evidently children trained to appreciate and acknowledge each and every kindness, however little. Anita's training, it must

be confessed, did not quite offset the innocent wilfulness of her tender years. Seated beside Bob, she calmly announced that she would not, could not, leave the boat.

"I say, Bob, won't you come in with us?" whispered Tom. "I'll get you a bathing suit in a jiffy."

"Oh, I've got my own, Tom, and I'll be delighted to join you. It's a pleasure to be with you all."

On learning that Bob intended swimming with the party, Anita, bubbling over with joy, left the boat incontinently, holding Bob's hand, and escorting him with much ceremony to a dressing-room. Hobo included himself in the invitation, showing his gratitude to the little miss by numerous offerings of his paw and by other canine attentions.

The children for a time did very little bathing. They watched Bob and Hobo. Never was the dog in higher feather. Hobo knew a good audience when he had it. When the dog, his mouth fast closed, swam out with Bob resting on his neck, the children became uncontrollably delighted.

"Say, Bob," whispered Anita, nestling up to him, upon his return to the platform, "can't you get Hobo to carry me?"

"Can you swim well?" asked Bob.

"Like a fish," returned her brother Tom. "Anita's more at home in the water than any girl of her age I know of."

"And are you a diver, Anita?"

"I love to dive."

"Hobo! Hobo! Come here!" shouted the master.

The dog, wagging his tail for very joy at being noticed by Bob, came to attention, fastening his eyes upon the boy's face, as who should say, "Won't you please tell me what you want?"

Then Bob, catching Anita in his strong arms, held her up on high.

"Now, Anita, I'm going to throw you in. When you come up, don't swim. Are you afraid?"

"Oh, go on, Bob," cried the delighted Anita. "Pitch me into the middle of the Mississippi."

Bob, at these words, flung her as far out into the river as he was able, crying at the same time, "Hobo, Hobo! There, Hobo!" pointing towards the girl, "get her, old boy!"

As Anita came to the surface, Hobo with a whine jumped in, and, before she could take a stroke, got under her. Anita clasped the dog, which, bearing her easily, began to paddle about in uncertain fashion. Having secured

the girl, the anxious dog did not know exactly what to do with her.

"This way, Hobo; this way!" shouted Bob.

The uncertainty vanished. Hobo made straight for his master, and, having reached the dock, waited patiently until Bob, stooping down, caught the child and placed her beside him.

When Hobo came to land he was the proudest dog in America, and received with unaffected delight the endearments of his charmed admirers, the way he wagged his tail and panted being beyond description.

Then Pierre insisted upon being thrown in. Pierre was landed with precision. Upon this Anita took another turn, and then Joe. At the end of fifteen minutes, Hobo was the happiest and the most wearied dog on the banks of the Father of Waters.

Towards the conclusion of these aquatic sports, a tall, somewhat austere-looking gentleman, arrayed in a Palm Beach suit, joined the group. It was beautiful to see how his austerity relaxed under the joyous greetings of those who were proud to call him father. Again there was on the part of Anita a struggle for precedence. On this occasion she bravely withstood each and every one of her

brothers and sisters. And she was the winner. It was Anita who with dancing eyes and in the prettiest manner conceivable escorted her father to Bob's side and introduced him gravely as Bob Ryan, her best friend. A kindly pair of eyes beamed from gold-rimmed glasses and a hearty hand met Bob's.

"You're a sight for sore eyes," said the father. "I've been watching you and the children. It was all delightful. In the best sense of the word, Bob, you're a genuine, up-to-date master of revels."

"You've the—the *loveliest* children I ever met in all my life," said Bob, devoutly.

"And they're all the lovelier," returned the pleased parent, "for meeting a boy like you. My children are very human and they have lots of faults—but you have the knack of bringing them out at their best."

"They're just what I thought they'd be when I saw them," answered Bob.

"Good!" said the man, breaking into a laugh. "You've got the secret. You get what you expect in this world, if your expectations are worth while. And yours are."

Suddenly whoops and screams of joy, according to the sex of the children, rent the air to the quick patter of ten bare feet. The children were all scampering up the shore.

Bob followed with his eyes the direction they were taking; and a vision rewarded his wondering gaze. Coming towards them, arm in arm, were two women, the older in the prime of vigor and life, upon her face that sweet expression born only of mother love; the other, a beautiful young lady, fair as a mistless dawn, with the brow, mien, and the smiling graciousness of a queen who knows not trouble and dreads no war.

"Lucille! Lucille!" cried Anita. "Come and meet my friend Bob."

And while Lucille was duly presented and then and there entered into a friendship with Bob which, as the sequel will show, was to have a tremendous influence upon her life, Tom and Alice were holding a secret conference with their mother.

She, too, was duly and proudly presented. Even the oldest boy joined with the younger children in thinking their mother the most wonderful and the most beautiful lady in the whole world.

"Bob," she said, holding his hand, and beaming upon the beaming youth, "the children, all of them, are simply wild to have you stay over night."

At this all the little ones began to talk at once.

"It's awfully kind of you, ma'am," returned the boy, "and I'd love to; but somehow I feel that I must go on. The longer I'd stay the harder it would be to part."

"Stay all the time," cried Anita, catching Bob's hand in both of hers.

"I'm jealous of my brothers and sisters," said Miss Lucille, the vibrant beauty of her voice in perfect keeping with her handsome features. "I understand you've given them a delightful boat ride."

"Oh, Miss Lucille, won't you try one, and you, Mr. Reade, and you, Mrs. Reade?"

Not waiting for a reply, Bob darted into his dressing-room. He was out very quickly and, taking advantage of the children's absence—all of them busy at changing—the party of four took a short excursion on the great river.

In the few minutes upon the water, Bob learned much. Mr. Reade was a prominent Iowa lawyer; his daughter Lucille, though neither she nor any of the family were Catholic, had been educated at St. Mary's Academy, Prairie du Chien. She had all the charm which is born of a good home and of convent-school training. Bob, while absorbing all this, gave a brief sketch of his exile and of his adventures on the road.

"How I should like to meet Tom Temple!"

said Lucille. "There must be a lot of good in him."

"Believe me!" ejaculated Bob with tremendous fervor. "I've sent a letter to that doctor asking about him; but I've told him not to answer till I can be sure of giving him an address. When I write again, I'll tell Tom to call this way and visit you at your home."

Every moment upon the water added to Bob's sorrow at the thought of leaving this lovely family. Just before they turned into shore, Mr. Reade buttonholed the boy.

"Bob, as I understand it, you feel that in obedience to your father you should go south, and also that you have made up your mind to earn money enough, if possible, during these vacation days, to pay your expenses for at least one more year at school."

"That's it, sir."

"Very good; suppose we talk business. My motor-boat happens to be out of commission at present, and I am anxious to give the children a treat. To-morrow I want to have an all-day picnic, and I am simply going to engage yourself and your boat on a purely business basis."

"And will you and Mrs. Reade and Miss Lucille come, too?" asked Bob with sparkling eyes.

"Of course."

"Good! And will you let me do the cooking? Tom Temple taught me."

"Certainly, provided you allow Lucille to be your assistant."

"Fine!" shouted Bob. "I agree with all my heart."

The children, now daintily clad—particularly Anita, who was all bows and ribbons—were awaiting them impatiently at the landing.

"Hey, children," announced Mr. Reade, as they drew within easy ear-shot, "I've good news for you."

"What is it, pa?"

"I'm going to give you an all-day picnic tomorrow."

The youthful members of the family made a faint show of hilarity; but there was a want of whole-heartedness in their manner.

"And Bob Ryan is to be captain and cook and mate and everything else. I have chartered *The Wanderer.*"

Then there arose such joyful screams and hurrahs, in which Lucille, the stately, took the leading part, as are seldom heard on bank or stream.

For the first time in several weeks Bob spent the night surrounded by all the comforts of civilization.

CHAPTER XI

Fishing and boating; a day on the river, and farewell to the Reades.

It was early dawn when the silvery tinkle of a tiny alarm clock coaxed Master Bob out of a deep and a refreshing night's slumber. He was sleeping beside Master Tom in that youth's special room.

"Hey, Tom!" he said, catching his companion by the arms and shaking him. Tom gave no sign of life.

"Fish, Tom, fish!" he shouted.

At the word "fish," magical to many an ear, Tom opened his eyes.

"Fish!" he echoed.

"Yes; it is the best time to catch them."

Tom on hearing this became perfectly awake.

The two dressed hurriedly and, carrying their shoes in their hands, so as not to disturb the sleeping family, made their way out, and then dashed for *The Wanderer*.

Tom not only knew the favorite places, but he was so skilled in the use of rod and line as to

obtain the best results. While Bob watched the engine, steering the boat close to shore, Tom made cast after cast. In a few minutes his industry was rewarded by the capture of a fine bass. Thereupon he insisted on Bob's taking a turn. Under Tom's cheerful and inspiring instructions, Bob soon acquired the art, and presently landed a fish larger than his teacher's. In an hour's time they had secured five black bass, enough to supply the Reade family for breakfast, dinner and supper.

It was nine o'clock when the party, headed by Hobo, who, due to his being off guard, had spent a peaceful and slumberous night outside Tom's room, squeezed themselves into *The Wanderer,* and seeking amid the mazes of the upper Mississippi inviting inlets, magic streams, shady nooks, and crystal creeks, enjoyed a boat ride made supremely delightful by fair breezes, golden sunshine, gleaming water, tonic air, and, above all, by mutual love.

Only one incident served to remind the happy picnickers that they were still exiled children of Eve and that Arcadia was still to seek. Sheltered by thick willows, they were skirting the Wisconsin side of the river, when a gruff oath and a shrill scream startled their unexpecting ears. Slowing down his motor, Bob turned in closer to shore.

"I've had enough of you; go back to your folks," came the cruel tones of a man.

"But, my God, Bill, I've left them all for you! I daren't go back; you promised to marry me."

"I don't care. Go on, now. Go back!"

"I can't—I can't—— Oh, Bill!" Another scream rent the air.

Finding an open spot between the willows, Bob had effected a landing. He sprang from the boat, took a few steps, and there saw one of those awful scenes which ill-ordered love of pleasure and lost sense of duty so often create.

A young woman, hardly more than a girl, bedraggled in appearance and with tear-stained face, was being throttled by a burly brute not more than three or four years her senior.

For the first time in this story of Bob Ryan, the boy kindled with anger. Springing forward he caught the man's arms, and endeavored vainly to wrest them from the wretched young woman's neck.

"You brute!" he said, releasing his hold and striking the man with his right fist full in the eye.

The fellow, with clenched hands, turned upon Bob, and I fear it would have gone hard with our hero had not Mr. Reade and Tom

both hurried forward. Seeing them, the man turned and fled, leaving behind him a deserted young woman, half strangled, and with a discolored eye.

It was Lucille who took the poor creature in hand; it was upon Lucille's bosom that the abandoned girl wept; it was into Lucille's ear that she poured the world-old tale of womanly vanity and weakness and of man's brutality and deceit.

The issue of it all was that the girl, softened, repentant, and filled with gratitude to her rescuers, bade them adieu, and, provided with railroad fare, promised to go home to her father's house.

"Poor girl!" said Lucille as the party returned to the boat. "But for God's goodness, I might be where she is to-day."

And so the subject was dismissed; and the children, who, thanks to the prudence of their mother, had been kept aboard *The Wanderer* and screened from the horrible scene, once more bubbled into joyous talk and laughter.

Presently, on an island, deep-wooded and high above the water, they selected their picnic ground. It had been arranged, as we have already seen, that Bob was to be chef, with Lucille as his assistant. This plan did not find favor in Anita's eyes. She insisted upon help-

ing, too. Much as he loved young people, Hobo regarded all this with mixed feelings. It seemed to worry the noble dog that his education had not embraced cookery. Under the circumstances, then, he did the best he could, getting into Bob's way, upsetting Anita, and embarrassing the stately Lucille by untimely offers of friendship. It was during these hours of preparation for dinner that Bob cemented for life his friendship with the amiable and cultured young lady of the family, not neglecting, in his exquisite taste, to show due attention to Anita. All this was very hard upon Hobo. His expression seemed to indicate that he was beginning to revise his opinion of young people and that they were not the unmixed blessing he had hitherto considered them.

The dinner was served with a taste and finish which, as Bob said, would have drawn approval from Tom Temple himself. In the golden afternoon the party resumed their voyaging, and in the light of an opalescent sunset they arrived happy, hungry and weary at their dock.

Then after a hearty supper came the sweet sorrow of parting. One would have thought that Bob and the Reade family had grown up together.

"Put this in your pocket, Bob," said Mr. Reade, as with his entire family he escorted Bob to the landing. "It's a small payment for your material service; I'm not trying to pay you for the things that cannot be measured by money. If I read you aright, you are going to succeed in pretty much anything you undertake. Therefore, let me give you one piece of advice: Hitch your wagon to a star."

As Bob, chin pillowed upon his hand, with Hobo perched upon the prow, moved out into the waters incarnadined by the afterglow of sunset, Anita burst into loud lamentations, Hobo gave three solemn whines, and as the boat sped down the river the last sight of the Reade family revealed to our sad hero Lucille, the beautiful, the stately, waving with one hand her handkerchief, with the other patting the golden hair of her weeping little sister.

CHAPTER XII

In which Bob makes fashionable friends, Hobo proves to be the hero of the day, and The Wanderer passes to other hands.

As I have already said, it was Bob's custom to lay to whenever the occasion offered and watch the children bathing in the river. Were it not for this pretty custom, this chapter in all probability would be quite different and, in fact, the whole story would be other than it is.

Just three days after his never-to-be-forgotten picnic with the Reades, he came upon a party of children, arrayed, all of them, in extremely fashionable bathing suits. There were nine or ten in the group, varying in ages from ten to fifteen—most of them, seemingly, having a great dread of wetting their costumes. Our story has to do with only two of this aristocratic party—a boy of fifteen and a girl slightly his junior.

"Hello!" called Bob, cheerily, as he came close to the landing on which most of the prospective swimmers were contemplating the

water. "Would any of you like to take a little ride?"

The faces of the individual members of the party became, with one exception, irresolute. The exception was that of the boy of fifteen, evidently their leader. Towards him they all looked inquiringly. Upon his haughty features there flitted a sneer, followed by a smile of superiority.

"Nothing doing, Johnnie," he said disdainfully. "That boat's not fast enough for us."

"But," put in the girl, who was standing beside the haughty youth, "we're very much obliged to you." And she smiled very sweetly.

"You're quite welcome," said Bob, concealing as well as he could his wounded feelings.

"Say, Harriet," continued the leader, "suppose you swim out with me to the island. These people here are afraid of getting wet."

"I never swam that far in my life," said Harriet, shaking her head. "I'd be afraid to try it."

The sound of their voices came clear and distinct over the water to the quick ear of Bob, who, at his lowest speed, was resuming his southern way. He raised his head and surveyed the island. It was, he estimated, at the very least two hundred yards from the bathers. Bob stopped the engine and allowed his boat to

drift in the shade of the willow trees skirting the island bank.

"You don't know what you can do till you try," returned the leader. "I've seen you swim before, Harriet, and I'm sure you can make it easily. If you get tired out, just let me know, and I'll lend you an arm."

Some of the listeners hereupon giggled.

"What's the matter with you people?" cried the youth. "At our academy I was reckoned the best swimmer of all the boys in attendance. Come on, Harriet—it's no distance at all—not more than a hundred yards."

"Oh," cried Harriet, "is that all? I thought it was more. I feel quite sure I can swim a hundred yards; I've done it before. Come on, Roydon."

"Let's dive," said Roydon.

"One hundred yards," echoed Bob from *The Wanderer*. "If that boy is as good a judge of swimming as he is of distances, he may not be able to make it himself." And Bob, as he spoke, started his engine gently, turning and moving slowly, noiselessly up-stream.

It must be admitted that the two dived very gracefully, emerged in due time and, with picturesque overhand strokes, pushed out into the river.

"I don't like the overhand stroke for any-

thing but a short swim," murmured Bob, the concern growing on his face; and he unlaced his shoes.

As Roydon and Harriet came midway between the landing and the island, the commander of *The Wanderer* observed with no little trepidation that the girl's stroke was becoming less graceful and more rapid.

Bob took off his shoes and removed his coat.

"I'm—I'm afraid!" suddenly came, sweet, pathetic and pleading, the voice of Harriet. "I'm afraid!"

"Come on," returned Roydon, a note of indecision in his voice. "Come on. We've got to make it."

Then Bob noticed a change in Roydon's stroke. The swimmer was evidently nervous. Bob made the sign of the cross, and putting on the engine's full power, headed towards the two swimmers. They were farther away than he could have wished, and were being carried down-stream.

Suddenly Harriet, drawn by the current to the side of Roydon, cried out as she neared him, "Help me, Roy, help me!" And, as she spoke, she laid one hand upon her companion's shoulder.

Then something occurred which caused Bob to shiver with horror. Roydon shook himself

free and swam for himself. The girl sank.

The Wanderer, going for these few seconds its full speed, was now close to this most distressful scene. Shutting off the engine, Bob leaped into the water and, striking out vigorously, was in time to reach the girl as she came to the surface.

"Catch my hand, miss," said Bob, turning on his back and raising his arm above his head.

The girl clutched it with a force which pulled Bob under water.

"Don't be afraid," he continued as he arose with her. "Just put both your arms across my chest. There's not the least danger!" And Bob, on this occasion a real hero, actually succeeded in smiling the smile which invited perfect trust and which few could resist.

The affrighted girl was not of the few; she laid her hand quietly on Bob's breast, and that valiant water-rat, still on his back, struck out with hands and feet for the boat, which was but a short distance down-stream. On reaching the side, a new difficulty presented itself: how to get in. Bob was not obliged to study this plan at any length, for a sudden splash beside him brought a ready solution. Hobo had jumped into the water, and drawing up beside his master, looked with tender, anxious, inquiring eyes into the beloved face.

"Tell me what to do, and I'll do it." This was Hobo's message, expressed in perfect pantomime.

"Here, Hobo! Here, old boy! Hold her! —Now, miss," continued Bob, "just let me put your hands on my dog. He'll hold you—why, he can hold me—till I'm ready, in less than no time, to lift you into the boat." And Bob smiled again.

Harriet was obedient. She laid her hands quietly upon the dog, while Bob cautiously climbed into the boat. Then, leaning over, he caught the girl under the arms and lifted her in. Gently laying Harriet in the boat, with her head resting on the seat at the stern, Bob was about to transfer his attention to Hobo, who, skilled swimmer as he was, had not yet mastered the art of climbing from the water into *The Wanderer,* when cries of alarm, proceeding from the shore, caused him to turn his eyes in that direction.

"Roydon! Roydon!—He's giving out!" came the message in answer to Bob's gaze of inquiry.

Bob at once turned his face towards the island and saw Roydon quite near the shore, beating the water wildly. One step and Bob reached for Hobo and pulled him into the boat; another step, and with one strong, sure turn of

the wheel he set the engine going. As they started toward the island, Roydon sank.

Just then the misfortune that comes when least looked for happened: the engine, hitherto so helpful, stopped. Bob thought quickly. It would be impossible for him, by swimming, to reach Roydon from their present distance. Again, before he could start the engine, the boy might be drowned. Ah!

"Hobo, Hobo!" called Bob, placing his arms about the valiant dog's neck. "Look, look!" and Bob pointed towards Roydon, who had just come up and was struggling wildly.

"Get him, Hobo! Get him!"

With a whine which plainly said, "I'd die for you, my master," the dog leaped from the boat and set out at a speed far beyond Bob's possibilities for the struggling Roydon.

At the same time Bob got down on his knees beside his motor, studying it carefully. Danger, dire peril, stupefies many; others it arouses to keenest thought and quickest action. Bob belonged to the latter class. Just as Hobo reached the side of Roydon Bob succeeded in starting the engine. And it was none too soon. Roydon had completely lost his head. Literally, he would not allow himself to be saved. He grabbed the dog in such wise that both went down. Poor Hobo in Roydon's

grasp could use only one foot. It was very distressing to the devoted dog. Here he was willing, nay burning, to save the big boy, and the big boy would not give him a chance to swim. Nevertheless, Hobo managed to bring the panic-stricken lad to the surface; he managed, as he rose, to turn loving, wistful, imploring eyes upon the master whom he adored. He managed, too, to utter a low whine, breathing the soul of heart-breaking farewell, and then sank once more.

Harriet, little the worse for her experience, was now sitting up and, eager-eyed, taking in the situation with tense interest.

She turned from contemplating the sinking dog to the face of the lad at the wheel. The pathetic and low whine had brought tears to Bob's eyes. Harriet was startled when Bob actually blubbered, choked, passed a quick hand over his eyes and with a steersmanship which would have excited the admiration of any water man brought *The Wanderer* just beside the two strugglers as they came once more to the surface. It was the work of a second for Bob to stop the engine, reach over and grasp the dog.

Bob could have caught Roydon more easily; but he did not.

"Here, Harriet," he cried, "you catch hold of the boy."

Harriet did so; she had learned to obey the wonderful fat boy.

"Now you just hold him quietly. Keep his head above water."

While Harriet carried out these injunctions, Bob forced Roydon's hands from their hold upon Hobo, and tenderly lifted the devoted and exhausted dog into the boat. Then he performed the same office for the unconscious Roydon.

Harriet and Bob were still striving to revive the youth, when a large motor-boat, carrying two men drew alongside. A middle-aged man wearing the tense features we associate with "business" stepped into *The Wanderer* and, leaning over, gazed intently into Roydon's face, feeling at the same time for any heart pulsation.

"Why, he's all right," said the newcomer. "He's breathing perceptibly—I'm the boy's father," he added, addressing Bob.

"Glad to meet you, sir," said Bob, standing aside to let Roydon's father and the other stranger take charge.

"Suppose you steer for shore," suggested the second man.

Bob obeyed. Hobo meanwhile went over to Harriet and held out his paw. She shook it warmly, whereupon Hobo turned to his master and held up his head in woful inquiry.

"My master, did I do it the way you wanted me to?" Hobo's look expressed all this.

"You're the greatest dog in the world, Hobo," answered Bob, putting his free arm about the dog's neck. Whereupon Hobo wagged his tail vigorously, threw up his head, opened his mouth, panted joyously, and looked as noble as he really was.

"May I tell you," said Harriet to Bob, "how grateful I am? You saved my life, and I'll never, never forget!"

Bob smiled and bowed, while Hobo once more held up his paw to Harriet, and then with great satisfaction submitted to her patting him upon the head.

It was at this point that Roydon opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked.

His father, who had been sprinkling water upon his head, explained the situation.

"I lost my nerve," said the boy, sitting up. "I don't know why."

Bob kept his eye on Roydon during these words, and, as he listened, noticed how deeply stained with nicotine were the forefinger and

thumb of the boy's right hand. Bob, without knowing it, saw the answer. Those fingers told the tale of nerves excited to the point that no growing boy can endure without loss of staying power.

"I'm sure," said Mr. Spain, Roydon's father, "that you lost your head, Roydon, or you would not have acted as you did. If it hadn't been for this wonderful boy and that extraordinary dog, Harriet and yourself would have been drowned. What is your name, boy?" he added, addressing the owner of *The Wanderer*.

"Bob Ryan, sir."

"We're indebted to you deeply, Bob Ryan. I shall see that you are suitably rewarded."

Bob flushed; he was annoyed and hurt.

The Wanderer had now reached the landing; Harriet shook Bob's hand warmly; Roydon, somewhat dazed, said as he passed, "Much obliged." Hobo followed the girl to land, and jumping in front of her held up his paw. She shook it lovingly.

"Here, dog, shake!" said Roydon, unbending himself and speaking quite graciously.

Hobo swept his eyes over Roydon, and then turned tail and walked away with great dignity. Hobo was a wonderful dog.

"Now," said Mr. Spain, while these leave-

takings were going on, "I want to pay you for your service, Master Bob Ryan." And Mr. Spain took out his pocketbook.

"What services, sir?" said Bob, still seated beside his engine.

"Why, saving my boy—and Harriet."

"Things like that are not paid for, sir," said Bob, losing for the moment his cordial smile.

Mr. Spain, who had been counting out a number of bills, paused in his action and took another look at the boy.

"Oh, beg pardon," he said. "Business and money have spoiled me. I was a gentleman once. Really, I'm very grateful. My boy may not be what he ought to be, but he's the only child I've got—a spoiled one at that. As for Harriet, she's the only daughter of the only friend I have contrived to hold after ten years of business. Had she been lost, it would have ruined her father's life. It's good to have at least one friend. I'll wager on this, Bob Ryan, that you have plenty of friends!"

"I'm a lot richer that way," returned Bob with his old kindly smile, "than you are, sir."

"Anyhow," continued Mr. Spain, "you have more sense than to measure everything in terms of dollars, as I did a minute ago, when I wanted to pay you for saving lives. I should not have put it in that way. Look you, Bob

Ryan! Tell me honestly, do you need any money?"

"Not now, sir."

"But you will soon?"

"I am saving up to make a year at school before I go to work."

"Do you see your way through?"

"Not yet, sir; but I have several weeks ahead of me."

"How do you expect to earn it?"

"I average a dollar a day by fishing. And then I expect to sell this boat."

"What's it worth?"

"I paid fifty dollars for it to a man who bought it for one hundred. It's a fairly new boat, and was worth when first sold one hundred and seventy-five dollars."

Mr. Spain spent a few minutes examining *The Wanderer.*

"Do you want to sell it?" he asked presently.

"Not now, sir; I can use it yet."

"And what do you expect to sell it for?"

"For one hundred dollars."

"Bob, do you know that this boat is practically as good as when it came from the factory? In fact, the short service it has given simply has proved that it is an unusually good boat. Now I want to make you a proposition. I need that boat. In fact I want to present it to

Harriet. It will be a souvenir of this rescue to all of us, and it will be a form of apology to Harriet's people for the unpardonable foolhardiness of my son. It is very unlikely, if you wait, Bob, that you'll get more than one hundred dollars for that boat; not because it isn't worth it, but because it is second-hand. I'll give you its worth—one hundred and seventy-five dollars."

Bob gasped; such a sum looked almost big enough to allow him to carry out the desire he had most at heart.

"Thank you, sir. But that's not fair. You ought to take off something for wear and tear."

"But there is practically no wear and tear to speak of. I've taken stock and find that you've got everything in first-class order. The boat is as good as new, and has the guarantee of use to show it is what it ought to be. It's worth every cent I offer."

"I'll take one hundred and sixty," said Bob, after he had nestled his chin in his favorite attitude.

"Here you are, Bob Ryan. You will notice," continued Mr. Spain with a wry smile, as he handed Bob a roll of bills, "that in buying this boat I take no account of its value from the sentimental side. As you said, I thank you

for reminding me, there are some things we can't pay for; and in giving you this money for your boat, I realize that I am still your debtor."

"Thank you, sir," returned Bob. "I hope I wasn't rude. I'm afraid I didn't understand you at first."

"Ah! but you *did* understand me. And you've set me to thinking. Now another thing, Bob—how about that wonderful dog of yours? Would you care to name a price for him?"

"Hobo! Hobo!" cried Bob. "Come here!"

With two eager leaps, the dog was beside his master. "Now, Mr. Spain, call him to you."

"Hobo, Hobo!" cried the man. "Come, come!"

"Will you leave me, Hobo?" cried the boy, his voice rich in affection.

Then Hobo closed his mouth and groveled, absolutely groveled at his young master's feet, laying his head between them.

"Mr. Spain," said Bob, "Hobo is the only friend I am allowed to keep. I have many others, but they are far away, and I may not see them again. I wouldn't sell my dog for all the money you've got."

Then Hobo arose, planted his feet on Bob's shoulders, gave three short yelps, and gazed lovingly into his owner's face.

"It's a new way for me to look at things!" said Mr. Spain after a tense pause; "but I think I understand."

CHAPTER XIII

Discovering a new fairy island, and bringing Bob a new friend and a new manner of life.

QUITE early next morning, Bob Ryan, still lamenting the loss of *The Wanderer,* was sitting on a log beside the Mississippi, which was dancing into thin wavelets to the music of the breeze. Rich in money, Bob had not felt poorer since the night he was sent forth by his father into the world to shift for himself. There was nothing left him but his beautiful Hobo. Since selling his boat he had come to realize more and more how much he loved it. Then, too, his books, his camp bed, they were gone. It is true he had not sold these; they were kept by Mr. Spain to be forwarded when their owner should need them. Bob, without being able to put his thoughts into words, was beginning to understand the bitterness of parting—the agony of separation.

"There was never such a boat!" he ejaculated sadly.

Hobo, considering that the remark was ad-

dressed to him, placed his fore feet upon his master's shoulder.

"Will you please make that remark over again?" his eyes indicated. "I don't think I quite caught your meaning, my master."

"What I really ought to have said, Hobo," returned Bob, "is that you're the best dog in all creation."

If Hobo failed to comprehend exactly Bob's words, the loving smile of his master gave him the clue to their import. Perfectly satisfied, he resumed his natural position and barked long and loud for sheer joy.

"Here, Hobo, get this." And Bob as he spoke threw a stick far out into the water.

If there was one thing Hobo was certain of, it was that swimming after sticks and bringing them back to his master was one of the most important things in the world. To do it speedily and in a workmanlike way, was, he considered, the whole duty of a dog. It was at once the most serious and the most joyous service he could offer.

Hobo, then, dashed down the bank and into the river with a vim, an earnestness worthy of any cause howsoever sacred.

He reached the stick, secured it, and, with the same tremendous earnestness, was returning when the ears of Master Bob were greeted

by the sound of as pleasant a singing voice as he had heard since his departure from Dubuque. The voice was a noble bass, a rumbling bass; and the words came clear over the water:

Campion will shine to-night,
  Campion will shine!
Campion will shine to-night,
  Campion will shine!
When the sun goes down and the moon
    goes up,
  Campion will shine!

These simple and ecstatic words made no impression upon Hobo. With all possible haste he gained the shore and held up his head till Bob accepted the stick, whereupon Hobo wagged his tail with the air of one who had performed a feat worthy of a Carnegie medal.

The wagging tail was lost upon Bob, whose eyes were just then held in admiration by the spectacle of a canoe appearing around a bend, a canoe graceful as a kitten, green as an emerald, pretty as the smile of tender innocence. In the canoe, seated at the stern, sat the singer, a young man, wielding an easy and strong stroke. He perceived Bob, and catching the smiling eyes drew his paddle from the water and winked.

"Good morning!" cried Bob, "I like your canoe."

"Good morning!" returned the canoeist; "and I like your dog."

"Are you a Campion student?"

"You win," returned the singer.

"I know a boy from Campion," said Bob in his most cordial manner. "He's one of the best friends I've got. His name is Tom Reade."

"You don't say!" cried the canoeist. "Have you known him long?"

"Not more than two days," answered Bob.

"Oh," said the other, with one stroke bringing his canoe alongside the bank. "You're pretty swift, aren't you?"

"How's that?" asked Bob.

"Swift at making friends."

"I've got to be," answered Bob. "If I don't they're gone. The only thing I can hold on to is this dog."

"What kind is he?"

"He's mixed," replied Bob, expanding into a grin made up of amusement and affection. "He's got all the good qualities of six or seven breeds, and the faults of none."

"I like that dog," continued the canoeist. "And I say—can you use a paddle?"

"I think so."

"Well, would you like to take a spin with me? Or have you anything special to do?"

"The only thing special," answered Bob, looking up, "is breakfast. I'm still fasting."

"Here, jump in! And bring your dog. That's it. If you want breakfast, you've come to the right shop. Get your paddle going, and I'll steer you to my den and feed you and the dog too. That's it; why, you have a splendid stroke!"

Hobo, in the middle of the boat, rested upon his haunches, held up his head, opened his mouth, and gratefully inhaled the air, giving the impression that he had lived his life in that canoe.

"And your dog—what's his name?"

"Hobo."

"Well, Hobo, whatever his breed, is a regular water dog. The more I see of him, the more I like him. And the more I like him, the more I like his owner."

"Thank you," returned Bob. "I think I'd like that Campion College you were singing about, if all the boys there are like you and Tom Reade."

"Put down your paddle and listen," ordered the canoeist. "As to what I am about to sing, all I've got to say is, them's my sentiments."

With this prelude, the singer, to the tune of

"Altogether," rendered the song of Campion College, while the canoe drifted idly.

I.

Sing the song of Campion College,
Every loyal son!
Her fair motherhood acknowledge,
Bless the name of Campion!
Who can forget her
Hills and woods and waters dear?
What friends are better
Than the friends she gave us here?

II.

By thy gates Marquette won glory,
Mother of our youth!
And the Martyr Campion's story
Tells us how to die for truth.
Airs of high endeavor
Herald thee of noble race;
We, thy sons, will never
Bring a blush into thy face.

III.

Far and widely we may wander
In the years to come;
But with fondness we shall ponder
On our good old college home.

Rise, gather near her!
Hail her with our loudest cheers!
She will be dearer
With the passing of the years.

"When you sang that," said the delighted Bob, "I felt like a Campion boy myself."

"You couldn't feel better, then," returned the vocalist. "But to return to your remark about Campion and Tom Reade and myself, I think I may say that there are a lot of boys there like me. But I must also say that there are not many like Tom. He's not in my division. He belongs to the junior division; but it is pretty well known that he has the nicest manners and the finest head of any boy there. If he were a Catholic, he would be prefect of the Junior Sodality. He's a handsome boy, too—pretty as a picture; but there's nothing soft about him, and though he hasn't our faith, he's good to the core."

"Say, I just love to hear you talk like that of him," said Bob.

"Why?"

"Because he's my friend."

"You are lucky to have such a friend. By the way, my name is Matt Morris; what's yours?"

"Bob Ryan."

"Shake!" cried Matt, holding out his paddle.

Bob extended his till the paddles met.

"I'm awfully glad to meet you," pursued Bob, renewing his stroke. "I was very lonesome just now, and feeling rather blue."

"Why?"

"Oh, on account of a lot of things. I'm alone. Last night I gave up my motor boat, *The Wanderer*. Oh, it was a peach of a boat! And now the only thing I've got left is good old Hobo."

"Do you know," said Matt, "that it's a queer thing to pick up a decent boy like you all alone on the banks of the upper Mississippi—a boy with a fine dog and not knowing where he is going to get his breakfast?"

"It is queer," admitted Bob. "And in fact my whole story for the past six weeks is queer, too."

"Would you mind telling me your story?" asked Matt. "Apart from the fact that I'm naturally curious about it, I want to say that I have a better reason than that for asking you. And besides, I've got a little story of my own."

"I'll be glad to tell you," said Bob.

"Well, we land here; and after your breakfast we'll have an account of all your adventures."

Into a cozy little cove, Matt Morris steered

the canoe. Drawing it up from the land, he slipped it, with the assistance of Bob, between a growth of bushes, so that completely concealed on every side it was protected from the rain by the overhanging branches of a huge cottonwood.

"Now you just follow me," proceeded Matt, "and you shall see what you shall see."

The way led upward on a path skirted by a stream clear as crystal and magic with the music of falling water. Trees and shrubs lined the path.

"Is this the way to fairyland?" ejaculated Bob.

"It depends on who climbs it," Matt made answer. "I'm in hopes that it will be fairyland to you."

Then out sang a yellow bird, a canary, so blithely that it sounded to Bob's enchanted ears like a song of welcome. He paused, put his hands to his mouth, and gave a birdlike call; whereupon the tiny canary, after cocking its head in momentary silence, broke into an ecstasy of melody and, drawing quite near, circled about Bob's head.

Hobo was delighted with that bird; he wanted to extend the paw of friendship.

"Say, you're a wonder!" Matt exclaimed.

Making no reply to this tribute, Bob put his

hand to his mouth and uttered another bird call. In answer the grove became vocal. Every bird in the neighborhood apparently took a part in the multitudinous sweet jargoning.

"This *is* fairyland," ejaculated Bob, glowing with delight.

"And you are Oberon," returned Matt. "Where's your Titania?"

"Tom Temple told me the story of *Midsummer Night's Dream;* so I just happened by accident to know what you are talking about. My Titania is a good many miles up the river."

"Well, I declare!" gasped Matt.

"Her name," Bob went on serenely, "is Lucille, and she's a young lady, Tom Reade's oldest sister. She's a queen, all right—Hello! what's this?"

There was a good reason for Bob's burst of wonder. Beside the stream, just a little below a miniature waterfall, was a natural stone platform, almost perfectly smooth, running back some thirty feet into the mouth of a cavern. The half of the platform nearest the cave was completely screened off, revealing to Bob an open-air apartment equipped with chairs, tables, boxing gloves, paddles, Indian clubs, dumbbells, and a variety of articles, all, taken

in combination, telling the tale of an owner who loved athletics and the open.

"That's my place," answered Matt proudly. "I discovered it myself. Hardly any one ever comes here. The cave is for keeping provisions and things that can't stand wetting, and it comes in handy for shelter in bad weather.

"But the wire netting—that's the thing! I live screened by that netting in the open day and night—and bats and mosquitoes and flies and other creatures can't get at me."

"Why, this is fairyland!" said Bob once more. "A real cave that goes in over twenty feet, high and dry, and a room that's a room, and yet isn't a room. It's the best arrangement for living I ever saw."

"I'm mighty glad you like it," observed the proud owner, as he unlocked the one door at the center. "Now come in, sit down at that table, and I'll have your breakfast ready in a few minutes."

There was a slight hollow near the middle of the part screened off. Matt brought from the cave a few sticks and a piece of paper to this particular spot, struck a match, and as the flames sprang up, re-entered and returned with some stale slices of bread, and a bit of beef fastened upon a pronged stick, seeing which lat-

ter Hobo began to show signs of unusual interest.

"Let me do my own cooking," pleaded Bob.

"No, you're my guest. Suppose, while I'm getting things ready, you let me have your story."

Thus adjured, Bob began. Breakfast was served, and he continued. Breakfast came to an end, and he still went on. And Matt, cooking, serving, cleaning up, listened, nevertheless, most intently.

"Bob," he said, when the youngster had come to an end, "that story of yours is a regular picaresque romance. It's a great story. I envy you. I'd walk a hundred miles to see old Mose and that wonderful old woman, his wife. I'd give anything to have a friend like Tom Temple, in spite of his one weakness. And that landlord and his wife are just stunning. Best of all, you're lucky to have friends like the Reades. Lucille, according to you, walks in beauty like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies. And that little Anita is almost too good to be true. As for your friend Roydon, all I can say is I'd like to have him here for three weeks. I think I'd make a man of him."

"I really believe you would," returned Bob, gazing in admiration at Matt Morris. The

young man was as light and as quick upon his feet as a cat; his physique was almost perfect; health and strength revealed themselves in the glow upon his face, in the bright and clear eye, in the quick play of muscle, clearly evident despite the negligee shirt and duck trousers.

"But," continued Matt, "as I can't have him, I want you, Bob Ryan."

"How do you mean?" asked the boy.

"I want you to be my companion and rough it with me for three weeks or so. It won't cost you a cent."

Bob looked about him, and deep longing came upon his face.

"Matt," he said, "I never found it so hard in all my life to say no as now. I'd just love to live with you, but I feel I must go on."

"You're over-weight," urged Matt. "I'll train you down so that you'll be fit as a fiddle for your school year. You can just go and study your head off."

"Don't tempt me, please," implored Bob.

Matt Morris took a few turns, then he said.

"You were saying a while ago you were dead anxious to go to Confession."

"I am—I certainly am, especially since I tried to save Hobo first, preferring him to Roydon. That's near worried me sick."

"Well," said Matt smiling, "I don't blame

you much. Hobo was a hero, Roydon was a cad. All the same, putting feeling aside, there's no doubt that Roydon, being a human being, should have had first chance. But to return to the main question, if you stay with me for three weeks, I'll prepare you for Confession and Communion."

In lieu of reply, Bob jumped to his feet and danced; Hobo, unable to miss such an opportunity, barked gleefully and, leaping, brought his paws on Bob's shoulders. The dog got more than he bargained for, when Bob, catching both paws, put him through a vigorous and most athletic one-step. Hobo seemed to consider this very undignified; and so a one-step is —for a dog; but he submitted gracefully out of love for his master.

"There, Hobo," said Bob pointing to Matt, "there's our new partner."

Hobo thereupon walked over and held out his right paw. Matt shook it. The left paw was in turn offered and received. Finally Hobo, to show perfect confidence in their new friend, put his forefeet on Matt's shoulders.

A new society—limited to three weeks—was thus to the sound of running waters and whispering leaves and twittering birds happily incorporated.

CHAPTER XIV

In which Bob goes into regular training with wonderful results, becomes a bird charmer, and spends three happy weeks in the woodlands.

Two hours later, Bob, Matt, and Hobo were in the canoe.

"While you do the canoeing," said Matt, "and goodness knows you need the exercise for your weight—180 pounds—"

"I weighed 190 when I left Dubuque," interpolated Bob.

"And you'd be heavy enough at 160, probably ten pounds over weight. And now, while you paddle, I'll tell you my story."

"Fine!" said Bob, putting his enthusiasm into his stroke.

"To begin with, up to the age of fifteen—that is, up to three years ago—I was a very delicate, sickly boy."

"You were?"

"I certainly was. At fifteen I was in second year high at Campion College."

"How sorry I am I never ran up to see that college," said Bob. "It is only eighty miles

or so by the river from Dubuque. Excuse me, Matt, go on."

"Towards the end of the school year I got so weak that I was sent home. Our family doctor examined me, and was puzzled. He brought in a specialist, who thumped me pretty hard, and told me I had consumption."

"That sounds like a joke," said Bob. "People who have consumption die of it. They do not turn into athletes."

"That's what I thought when he told me," said Matt with a smile. "And I said to him, 'Well, doctor, how long have I to live?' Then the doctor laughed, and said, 'Get this into that head of yours and keep it there: *Consumption can be cured.* What you need is plenty of air, sunshine, and plain, good food. It's April now. If you keep to the outdoors for four months or so, I'll engage that you'll be able to go back to college in better health than you've ever been in your life."

"And the doctor was right, was he?"

"He certainly was. I came back to Campion in September, and got into the basket-ball team, and began to take part in all the outdoor games. The next summer I discovered this cave, and fixed it up. When I came back to Campion I won prizes in the Junior Division

for running and jumping. Next year I'm going to make the football squad."

"And so you're cured?" asked Bob.

"Yes; and there are thousands and thousands of men and women throughout the country who could be cured as I was, if they'd only use common sense, which, in their case, would mean open air, sunshine, and nourishing food."

"I didn't know that," commented Bob.

"Well, you're in the same boat with hundreds of thousands. There's hardly a city in the country but has a league for stamping out consumption. They call it the Anti-Tuberculosis League and although the members spend most of their time and money in publishing the cheering fact that consumption can be cured, people go on believing that it can't, and for that reason, go on dying when they might live to do lots of good work."

"I'm glad to know that," said Bob.

"And now," continued Matt, "that I'm cured, I intend to stay cured. I want to do something in this world. Some day I hope to join a religious order, and that's why I spend six weeks of vacation at my cave."

"That's fine!" cried Bob.

"And I'm going to put you into shape, too," Matt went on. "You're going to shed one-half a pound a day at least for three or four weeks,

and when you leave me, you'll be as hard as nails. You've the makings of a giant; but you're just a bit flabby."

"You ought to have seen me when I left Dubuque, Matt. I've picked up a lot since I started out over a month ago."

"You'd have picked up more," said Matt, "if you had rowed and walked more and motored less. But we'll have great times. You ought to know that I intended having a classmate with me, so that we could box and fence and wrestle and canoe together. But my friend, through no fault of his, disappointed me; he was obliged to stay home on account of the serious illness of his mother. So don't think I'm doing you a favor in keeping you; it's the other way round."

"It's a tremendous favor," said Bob.

"To begin with," Matt went on, "I'm going to give you all this afternoon to write to Tom, Lucille, Anita, to Mose and his wife, to the innkeeper and, above all, to Tom Temple."

"I'm worried about Tom Temple," put in Bob. "And I pray every day for him."

"And besides," Matt resumed, "you had better write at once to Mr. Spain to send on your camp bed and your books. The postoffice is only a mile off. When you've done all that then you'll be ready for regular order."

"What's that, Matt?"

"First of all, we rise at five."

"I've been getting up with the birds right along," said Bob.

"Early to bed and early to rise," commented Matt. "On rising we say our prayers, run down to the river in our swimming suits, take a ten-minute splash, then dress and canoe just one mile or so down stream. It's only five minutes' walk to the church, where we hear six o'clock Mass."

"That will be fine," cried Bob. "I've been to Mass only a few times; my father wouldn't let me go. Little Angela explained it to me, and I love it."

"I serve the Mass regularly," added Matt.

"And will you teach me to serve too?"

"Gladly. And besides, I go to Communion every day."

"That ought to mean a lot to you, Matt."

"I should say it does. Do you know what daily Communion means to a boy, Bob, from fourteen years and up?"

"What?"

"It means clean thought, and clean speech, and clean living; and a lot more."

"How I wish I could go too," sighed Bob. "I'd like to be like you, Matt."

"To go on with our order: we leave the

church about 6:40, get back by 7:00, cook our breakfast, eat it by 7:30, and allowing time for reading or writing an odd letter, we take half an hour gymnastics at 8:30."

"Bully!" said Bob.

"At nine," resumed Matt, "we have an hour of catechism; from 10:00 to 10:30, boxing; from 10:30 to 11:30, a brisk walk up the hillside; at 11:30, a swim, and then dinner."

"Why, that's just glorious!" cried Bob.

"After dinner, we rest and talk till 1:15; then fencing for three-quarters of an hour. From 2 to 3, reading; from 3 to 4, more catechism; and at 4, more gymnastics, with some boxing and running, ending with a swim before supper. Supper's at 5:30."

"I think I'll be ready for it," said Bob.

"After supper, we go canoeing up the river into the sunset, then drift slowly down, watching the beautiful Mississippi sky. We are home by nightfall, and in bed by eight o'clock."

"If that isn't fairyland!" Bob exclaimed, "it's just as good in every way and in some ways better."

Bob spent what was left of the morning and a good part of the afternoon in writing to each and every one of the friends he had made on his way down the river; and after a hearty sup-

per and a delightful canoe trip went to rest, and slept till early dawn.

The next three days were almost perfectly delightful—marred, to some extent by the stiffness that came upon Bob from such unwonted exercise. On the fourth day Matt announced that the regular order would be dispensed with.

"You're pretty stiff, Bob; and besides, it's Saturday, and I intend giving you most of the morning for extra instructions; and this afternoon we're going to Confession."

Again Hobo was puzzled. Why should his master skip and dance?

Bob, thoroughly prepared, made his first Confession on that memorable day, and was told by the kind pastor to go to Communion on the next morning, and to continue going each day till further notice.

And the love which Bob brought to his fellowman, he brought also to Christ, the Lover of his soul. That Sunday in August, the day of his first Communion, remained a consecrated memory forever.

On Monday there came letters from Tom Temple and from Anita. Tom wrote as follows:

"My dear Bob: I see you have forgiven me;

I know not why. Well, I'm going to leave the hospital to-morrow, cured! With God's help, I'll be what I ought to be. I am going to try myself out for a few months. If I succeed in conquering myself, then, like the Prodigal Son, I intend to arise and go to my father's house. My father's house! Precisely. I purpose to join the Church which I have always loved. And then, to reduce the sweet phrase to an earthly meaning, I am going back home where I know my dear old mother waits for me and prays for me, morning, noon, and night.

"This is my first letter since my sickness, so it must be short. I am going to make it my business to call on mine host and his buxom wife, and, if I can only command the courage, upon that darling Anita, and the wonderful Lucille, and Tom, and all the Reade family.

"God bless you, Bob! If I'm ever a man, I'll owe it, under God, in great part, to you. Write again.

"Your devoted debtor,

"Tom Temple.

"P. S.—I think, I really think, that some of my ships are about to come in.—T. T."

Anita's letter was, clearly, a work of much labor.

"Dear Bob: When your lovely letter came, I put off my supper to read it; and I read it three times more, and I would have forgot my supper, only Mama reminded me. Lucille wanted to see my letter, but I would not let her see it. Don't you think I was right? I have put your letter away where no one can see it but myself, and I will keep it forever. I think of you a good deal, dear Bob. Do you think of me? Do you think of me often? Tell me about this when you write. I miss you so much. I miss you more than Lucille does. When are you coming back? Here! here! x x x x x x Lots of love.

"YOUR ANITA."

Bob put both of these letters carefully away; and with new spirit gave himself to Matt's daily order. Beginning each morning with the reception of Holy Communion, the boy made wondrous strides physically and spiritually. Each day his features became more clean-cut; each day he grew lighter, stronger, more enduring. He found Matt a most congenial and unselfish companion. From him he received lessons in boxing, fencing, and wrestling—all of these given and received with enthusiasm. Bob was fast becoming an athlete.

Matt, much to Bob's delight, continued the instructions in catechism, taking out of the allotted time occasionally a half hour or more for talks on literature; as a result of which, Bob's desire for another year of school became more intense each day.

In the course of a week, the screened room, in which the two lived all night and part of the day, became a gigantic bird-cage. First, there arrived one morning, at Bob's call, the little canary bird. She fluttered in through the door held open for her by him, and, perched upon the haft of a sword hung up against the screen, opened her sweet throat and filled the air with minstrelsy.

"Evidently," said Matt, "that bird was once somebody's darling."

"She's mine now," said Bob, cooing softly. Presently the canary flew over to the boy and circling around him lighted upon his shoulder. From that moment began a friendship between bird and boy which mightily annoyed Hobo. The noble dog, it is true, liked the canary; and he adored his master. But he really seemed to opine that the bird was too familiar with the boy, being wanting, as Hobo saw it, in respect for so exalted a personage; and therefore, when the bird alighted on Bob, Hobo threw his head up to the sky and barked in plaintive pro-

test. Sometimes, indeed, it looked as though Hobo were jealous; but I have not the heart to admit so mean a feeling in so noble a dog.

One day Bob found a tiny bird, a thrush, which had evidently fallen untimely out of its nest. The bird was slightly crippled. Bob took it up tenderly and brought it to his cave home, where with much care and great dexterity of finger, he succeeded in rounding the tiny thing into a fairly good condition. While he was thus engaged, a larger thrush came near, and beating its wings against the screen, gave manifest indications of her interest in Bob's occupation. The boy opened the screen door and cooed softly, whereupon Mrs. Thrush entered gingerly. She seemed rather to like the place, and though always careful, in the literal sense of the word, to keep her distance, showed in various wild ways that she thoroughly approved of Master Bob, that she tolerated Matt, and that she considered Hobo about the best thing there could be in the way of a dog.

On the second day of her arrival, Mrs. Thrush gave Bob by her cries and flutterings clear indications that she wanted to get out. Bob opened the door, and Mrs. Thrush, with great deliberation, hopped out, casting as she went longing, lingering glances at her liberator. She returned that afternoon, singing as

she came, and assisted in the music by five little thrushes. They all followed their mother in, and celebrated their arrival with a concert which Hobo listened to gravely and without prejudice; and which brought into the swelling bosom of the canary the first pangs of jealousy. When her turn came, the tiny yellow bird rendered a solo with trills which it would have done Tetrazzini good to hear.

Then a blackbird without took up the theme and, charmed by Bob's cooing, entered the screen and remained, like the other birds, a prisoner of love.

Within a few days, the little thrushes, beginning with the one Bob had picked up, came at the young bird-charmer's call and perched on his shoulders. There were concerts morning, noon, and early night.

Three happy weeks flew by. Bob was now stout and wonderfully strong, but no longer fat. He was a fair fencer, a good boxer; but as a wrestler he was extraordinary. In this pastime the disciple had become the equal of the master.

Bob and Matt had been trying their utmost one afternoon to best each other at wrestling, until, after fifteen minutes of fierce struggle, both decided to rest. The two, perspiring freely, were breathing easily. It was a diffi-

cult task indeed, and a long one, which would wind either of them.

"Well, Bob," said Matt, rubbing himself down vigorously, "aren't you glad you stayed?"

"Glad?" echoed Bob. "Glad is no name for it. It isn't so much that I'm strong and hearty as that you've made me into some sort of a Catholic. Matt, you're next to Angela in my heart. I wouldn't have missed these three weeks for anything in the world."

"Nor would I have missed them for anything in the world," said Matt. "God has given you the body of a giant and the heart of a St. Francis."

As Matt spoke, the canary dropped quietly upon Bob's right shoulder. Hobo, not even protesting at the familiarity, placed his forepaws upon Bob's knees and gazed into the boy's face as though he were just discovering something new and wonderful therein, while two tiny thrushes, with some tussle for right of perch, settled upon the boy's other shoulder.

"The heart of St. Francis!" repeated Matt. "That's just it. I wish I could take your picture now: the dog adoring, the canary meditating on one shoulder, and the thrushes fighting for place on the other."

"Say, Matt," said Bob, patting Hobo and

looking radiant with the love which reached from God to man, and from man to every living creature, "this thing is too good. I'm too happy; and just now, as I looked into Hobo's eyes—and Hobo is the best dog that ever lived —I felt a sort of a——of a——"

"A presentiment?" suggested Matt.

"That's it; a presentiment that this can't last!"

As he paused, the birds flew away, and the dog, whining, brought his paws to Bob's shoulders and gazed with a sort of new wistfulness into his master's eyes.

"Don't cross your bridges till you get to them, Bob," counseled Matt. "I say," he added, "I'm going down to see if I can't catch a fish for supper."

"And I," said Bob, "am going to take Hobo out for a run. He needs exercise."

So the two parted.

Bob, as the next chapter will show, was unwittingly a prophet.

CHAPTER XV

In which the birds desert Bob, and Hobo, the noble dog, performs a supreme service for his beloved master.

As Bob, returning from his tramp with the delighted Hobo, approached his cavern home, the tiny canary, evidently much disturbed, came flying to his shoulder and twittered nervously.

"Why, what's the meaning of this? Who let the bird out?" he exclaimed. "There must be something wrong! Here, Hobo, Hobo! Go," continued Bob, pointing towards the river, "and bring Matt back. The door is open, something's wrong, Hobo."

The dog whined, and showed extreme reluctance; he refused to obey his master's voice.

"Go!" commanded Bob.

Hobo whined and groveled, raising his head for one moment to reveal eyes that were pathetically pleading.

"Go!" shouted Bob sternly. He was cruel, as he thought, only to be kind.

Then, in utter desolation, the dog obeyed the

command, and Bob hurried to the open door. The lock had been forced. He entered quickly. All was silent; the birds with their sweet songs and happy twitterings were gone. The canary had risen from Bob's shoulder as he entered and flown away.

"There's something wrong," mused Bob, standing before the fireplace on the center of the platform. "I feel that some one's been here."

He looked about; there was no apparent sign of disorder. Then he peered into the cave. It was quite dark within, the evening sun being now in shadow from the surrounding trees. Bob could see nothing.

"By George!" he whispered to himself, "I feel it in my bones that somebody is here now."

Cautiously he stepped forward into the cave. He had not advanced more than two yards into its interior, when suddenly there dashed by him at full speed a man—dashed by him so close that the stranger's body touched Bob's right arm. Quick as thought Bob turned in pursuit, seeing in the act a stout, undersized man, the pockets of whose ragged coat were bulging. Not in vain had Bob been in training. Before the man could quite reach the gate Bob was upon him. Leaping into the air, the boy came down with all his weight upon the man's shoul-

ers, and with such force as to bear him to the ground.

"Here! You let me alone!" remonstrated the man, a weazen-faced, unshorn young rascal with ferret eyes. "I ain't done nothing."

Bob, nevertheless, sitting upon him, pinned him down, and quietly went through his pockets. He found that the fellow had taken nearly every small object of value in their possession. The man lay quite still while Bob emptied out the contents of his coat; but when the boy started to examine his trousers pockets, he struggled violently.

Then Bob caught the man's head and bumped it smartly against the solid rock.

"Keep quiet," warned the boy, "or I'll give you a bump that will put you to sleep!"

Presently, out of the man's hip pocket Bob drew the famous roll of bills, the savings of his six or seven weeks in the open.

"Now," said Bob, rising and dusting himself, "I think you had better go, or there'll be more trouble."

"I'm starving," said the man.

"You smell of beer," returned Bob.

"It's easier to get beer than food," urged the fellow, his eyes shifting from one side of the enclosure to the other. "Can't you give a fellow a piece of bread anyhow?"

"Perhaps," thought the kindest boy in Iowa, "this man is hungry. It must be that which has driven him to be a thief——. Well," he said aloud, "if you wait a moment, I'll get you something."

Bob turned and made for the commissary department in the cave. Suddenly a sharp yelp —Hobo's yelp—caused him to whirl round; and, as he turned, the yelp was followed by a cry of pain. A horrible sight greeted poor Bob's eyes. The thief having picked up one of the canoe paddles had been about to bring it down in one murderous blow upon his head. Hobo, who had returned in the nick of time, had jumped under the would-be murderer's arm and gripped him savagely, eliciting from the fellow the scream of agony.

Bob took one quick step forward; but he was too late. Shaking Hobo from him, the enraged thief brought down with all his force the paddle upon the devoted dog's head. A low moan came from Hobo as he collapsed. Again the man raised his paddle, but before he could renew the attack, Bob, his eyes blazing with anger, struck him with clenched fist a blow under the chin which sent him reeling. Following this, Bob caught the thief, whirled him around and with a strength made more than normal by his burning rage, kicked him to the

door, through the doorway, and with one final kick that sent the fellow sprawling, returned at break-neck speed to Hobo.

The dog was lying flat, his eyes closed, the blood trickling from one side of his head.

"Hobo! Hobo! dear Hobo!" cried Bob, throwing his arms tenderly about Hobo's neck.

At the sound of his master's voice Hobo raised his eyes, eyes of love, and opening his mouth licked Bob's hand.

"Oh, Hobo, Hobo!" continued Bob, "don't leave me! I love you, Hobo, I do!"

Hobo whined weakly. How wistfully he gazed at Bob! It was the wistfulness of love; the love which is too big for expression. Then the dog with an effort stood up and raised his eyes once more.

"That's it, Hobo, that's it, old boy. You'll be all right by to-morrow."

Hobo whined again, and with an effort raised his paw. Bob took it with one hand, putting the other in an affectionate embrace about the saver of his life, and gazing with all tenderness into the dog's pathetically wistful eyes. Hobo read that glance; the wistfulness vanished, calm and quiet took its place, and then, with a short sigh, a sigh, as it seemed to Bob, of sheer bliss, the noble dog, whose one

desire was to please his master, closed his loving eyes to open them no more.

. . . . . .

"I knew it couldn't last," said Bob that evening. "He was, I firmly believe, the best dog alive."

"So he was," said Matt warmly. "And he's had a death which is just the kind he would want. Don't you know, Bob, that often when I've seen Hobo looking at you, it seemed to me he wanted to say that he'd like to die for you. And that's just what he did. After he trotted down to call me, he barked savagely, then hurried back to you, beating me by several minutes."

"By the way," said Bob, "what became of that awful man?"

"He'll not come around here any more," responded Matt grimly. "I picked him up where you left him, and helped him into the river. I just stayed long enough to see that he could swim. He has two lovely black eyes, and a bump on his head which you gave him —the size of an ostrich egg. God forgive me! —but I did lay into him hammer and tongs before I dropped him into the river to cool off."

"I guess we had both better hike over to Father Smith and go to Confession," said Bob smiling ruefully. "And I'm afraid it will take

me full half an hour to get all the malice I have against that man out of my heart."

"You're right, Bob; we'll have to clean up our souls. And, now, Bob, I hate moralizing, but I'm going to do a little on this occasion. I've been thinking about Hobo. God made him, and gave him that wondrous wealth of love which he lavished on you. That dog thought you worthy of his love——"

"I wasn't!" said Bob huskily.

"Well, anyhow, God has given us the same wealth of love and more. And He is Himself our Master."

"I see your point, Matt. The memory of Hobo ought to show me how I can love, if I have sense enough to know that my Master is worthy of everything I can give Him."

"By Jove," laughed Matt, "we're talking like mystics. All the same, it's good common sense."

And so the two, sorrow-laden as they were, went to Confession, and turned homewards with lighter hearts. Anger and revenge had been driven out; peace and love had returned.

A surprise awaited them on their arrival. Standing at their door, sadness and anxiety upon his features, Bob recognized Mr. Reade.

The boy's heart sank.

"There's more trouble coming," he said.

CHAPTER XVI

The Reade family again. Anita still insists on having her way, with the usual result.

"WHY, Mr. Reade!" exclaimed Bob, running forward, "this is a great surprise! Is there anything wrong?"

"There's sore distress in our family, Bob," replied the lawyer, catching Bob's hand in his, "and I've come to ask you to do me a great favor."

"Anything I can do, I'll do gladly," replied Bob. "Mr. Reade," he continued, "here's the boy who took me out of the wet three weeks ago and has been doing all he can to make me a Christian and a man, Matt Morris."

"How do you do, Mr. Reade?" said Matt. "I could tell you from your boy Tom. He's the dead image of you, and as clean-cut a boy as goes to Campion College."

"Thank you, Matt," returned Mr. Reade, smiling for the first time. "My boy is what he is because of his mother. She's a true mother, if ever there was one. I'm glad to say that I know you well by reputation. Tom has often spoken of you; you are one of his swans."

"But what's the trouble, Mr. Reade?" broke in Bob. "There hasn't been an accident!"

"Anita," answered Mr. Reade, "your little Anita is very, very ill."

"But she'll get well?" Bob asked.

"I don't know. It's a case which seems to baffle the local doctor. Bob, she's been calling for you for three days."

"She has!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes; and I've come here, having traced you down the river for the past thirty-two hours, to ask you whether you won't sacrifice yourself to return with me and see my dear little girl. It may help."

"That won't be a sacrifice, Mr. Reade; it will be a privilege. When do we start?"

"If we leave here," answered Mr. Reade, looking at his watch, "within an hour, we'll be able to catch a train which will bring us back by nine o'clock to-night."

"Say, Matt," said Bob grasping his friend's hand, "don't think I'm ungrateful; but I must go. It's hard to leave you; it's—it's another wrench. You have done so much for me, and I've been so happy; but I really must go. Anita and I are fast friends. She's ill, and I love to help any sick child, even when I don't know them. So you'll excuse me, won't you?"

"Of course I will, Bob."

"It looks ungrateful," continued Bob, "for me to leave you after all you have done for me. I hate to think of you staying here alone."

"Oh, for that matter," said Matt, "I'm going too."

"You are!"

"Yes; for two good reasons. First, your company for these three weeks has given me a chance to get in as much work in the way of physical exercise as I would else have got in five weeks. I'm fitter than ever I was in my life. Secondly, I wouldn't care to be here without you, Bob. I'd miss you too much. We've been too happy. I understand now what Tennyson meant when he said that 'A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.' I'll break up camp to-night."

"I see, Bob," observed Mr. Reade, kindly, "that you still keep up your pretty trick of making friends as you go."

"And losing them," said Bob ruefully. "I lost one of my best ones a few hours ago."

"Indeed! Who was that?"

"Hobo."

"Hobo, that splendid dog? Tell me about it."

Bob then related his story, beginning with the loss of *The Wanderer*, and finishing with his encounter with the ill-favored thief. As he

spoke, the feeling came over him that possibly Anita, like *The Wanderer* and the faithful dog, was to be taken away untimely, so that towards the end of his narrative he could hardly command his voice for grief over the past and apprehension for the future.

Very soon all was ready for their departure, and Bob bade Matt a sad farewell.

"I believe," observed Mr. Reade, as he and Bob took their seats in the drawing-room car, "that love is the most powerful thing in the universe."

Bob smiled; he had no comment to make.

"What is creation, after all," continued the lawyer, "but an act of love!" He added dreamily, apparently forgetting Bob's presence, Coleridge's wonderful quatrain:

" 'All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.' "

For a long time the keen lawyer descanted on this theme. Love with him was the biggest theme in the world—love in its widest, all-embracing sense.

. . . . . .

Anita, watched over by Lucille, was lying still in her little bed, very pale and with ab-

normally brilliant eyes, when Mr. Reade and Bob entered the room.

"Oh, Bob!" exclaimed Lucille, with a smile which expressed her welcome more eloquently than words.

"Bob!" echoed Anita, a slight flush coming upon her cheeks. "Is he here?"

"I'm here, Anita," said the boy, slipping to her side, and grasping her two hands in his.

Anita sighed deeply, a sigh of utmost satisfaction, and closed her eyes.

Presently she opened them.

"I want to see Bob, alone," she said.

At this moment a trained nurse entered. She had been on duty from the first day of the child's sickness.

"Anita is raving," she observed calmly, disengaging Bob's hand from Anita's clasp, and motioning him away. In a matter-of-fact manner she took Bob's place, and made it clearly felt that she was unaware of his existence.

Miss Trainer, the nurse, was an uncertain young woman of an uncertain age. She was single, because in her younger days, she had been so intent on having a good time as to take no thought of life's responsibilities. She belonged to the ranks of the foolish virgins; and

is not for one moment to be confounded with these brave and noble single women who have elected to live a life of virginity in the world because they have chosen for love of Christ the better part, or because unable to give themselves entirely to God in the religious life, they have sacrificed themselves on the altar of self-denial, giving up all for the sake of imperative duty or for those near and dear to them. Nor is Miss Trainer to be considered in any way a representative of the splendid body of trained nurses whose lives are lives of unselfish service. She had become a nurse for the sake of pin-money. Her service was a matter of dollars and cents.

Anita was far from being pleased with Miss Trainer's proceedings. She glanced at the nurse with reproving eyes.

"I want to be alone with Bob," she said.

"Some other time, dearie," said the nurse with an attempt at a smile.

"Now!" said Anita.

"We're old friends, miss," explained Bob with his kindliest expression. "I'll do my best not to let Anita get excited, and I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance," he added with deference.

Miss Trainer softened.

"I really think," she said, smiling naturally

this time, "that you've got the right manner with sick people. If Anita gets excited call me in."

"Bob," said Anita when the two were alone, "am I very sick?"

"What makes you ask that?" asked Bob evasively.

"Because I heard our doctor say something to the nurse, and I heard him say 'very sick' and 'death.' Do you think I'm going to die, Bob?"

"O, dear Lord, no!" protested Bob. "I'll not let you."

"Now, Bob; promise me this: if I'm in danger I want to be baptized."

"Haven't you ever been baptized?"

"No, Bob; and I want to be a Catholic."

"That's fine, Anita; what put it into your head?"

"You did; you're a Catholic."

"But suppose I were not, wouldn't you want to be a Catholic, then?"

"Yes," answered Anita after a pause during which she picked the coverlet. "I would. My brother has told me ever so many things that he brought from Campion College; and Lucille is always talking about Catholics and what they believe. She's going to be one, too."

"But why don't you ask your father?"

"You see, Bob, he's not a Catholic. Now, Bob, won't you promise me?"

"Sure, Anita; and I'm going to explain the whole thing to your father." Saying this, Bob went to the door and called for Mr. Reade and Lucille.

"Mr. Reade," he said, "our little girl there wants to be a Catholic."

Mr. Reade looked startled, then puzzled, then pleased.

"So do her mother and Lucille and Tom. Certainly, let her be one. The whole family is going that way—thanks to Tom and Lucille."

A little gurgle of delight came from the child.

"And if she gets dangerously ill," continued Bob, "she wants to be baptized right away."

"In that case, I'll go for a priest myself," said Mr. Reade.

Very soon the grateful Anita fell into a gentle slumber with Bob at her side. As the night wore on, she became restless.

"Miss Trainer," said Bob, as the clock was striking eleven, "don't you think that Anita is growing worse?"

Miss Trainer, who, taking advantage of Bob's vigil, had been sleeping quietly in an armchair, arose, felt the child's pulse, and took her temperature.

"I'm afraid she's much worse," said the nurse; and going to the telephone, she called for the doctor, who when he arrived found the entire family at the child's bedside.

The doctor seemed at a loss.

"It's a peculiar case," he said, addressing Mr. Reade, "and I confess I don't quite understand it. Anita is now, I firmly believe, in a very dangerous condition."

"Is the danger acute?" asked Mr. Reade.

"I dare not say it is not," the physician made answer. "If the child gets through the night, and rallies sufficiently, I would advise you to take her to Cincinnati to my friend Dr. Bernson, who is the best specialist I know of in children's diseases."

"And so you think there's immediate danger?" asked Bob.

"There may be," returned the doctor. "I fear there is: we can only hope."

"Mr. Reade," said Bob. "How long will it take to get a priest?"

"At least one hour, my boy."

"Then," said Bob, "we've got to do it at once."

"Do what?"

"Baptize her."

"Without a priest?" asked Mr. Reade.

"Dear father," said Lucille, "in case of ne-

cessity, any one may baptize. That's what the Catholic Church teaches. Bob, here, by pouring the water and saying the words can make Anita a child of God and an heir of heaven, so that in case she dies, she will be received forthwith in the arms of her Saviour."

Anita, who for some time had apparently been unconscious, raised her eyes.

"Baptize me, Bob," she said.

Mrs. Reade threw her arms about the child's neck, and bestowed upon the little one all those fond endearments which only mothers know. Lucille hastened away, returning at once with a vase filled with water.

Then, while the mother and the older sister supported the fast-failing child, Bob with a fervor which was in itself a sermon to all present, first prompting Anita to making acts of faith, hope and love, poured the water on her head, saying slowly, distinctly and reverently, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Bob after a short pause held a crucifix to the child's lips. Anita kissed it, then throwing her glance upon all present, smiled, said in triumph, "Now," and sank into unconsciousness.

"Father," said Lucille, the tears shining in her beautiful eyes, "I think it would be the

proper thing now to wait on the priest at St. Raphael's and tell him what has been done."

"Yes," said Bob. "We've done our best; but surely he can do more."

"I'll motor over to Father Lilly at once," said Mr. Reade.

When, escorted by the lawyer, Father Lilly entered the sick-room, he was startled and edified to discover the entire family kneeling in prayer about the unconscious child.

"First," he said after a hurried greeting. "I'll read a blessing over little Anita."

Taking out his stole and a tiny booklet, Father Lilly sprinkled the room and the child with holy water, and proceeded to read certain prescribed prayers. Finally using the English tongue he said, while holding his right hand upon Anita's brow, "They shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. May Jesus, the son of Mary, the Lord and Redeemer of the world, through the merits and intercession of the holy apostles Peter, Paul and all His saints be favorable and gracious unto thee. Amen."

There was a moment's silence, broken by a gentle sigh from Anita, who then opened her eyes, once more threw a glance of triumph upon all present, and again said with still greater emphasis, "Now!" But she did not

close her eyes this time. She directed her gaze upwards and said:

"I feel that blessing. It's good."

She no longer gasped: her breathing had become easy.

"I think," remarked the priest with joy on his face, "that there'll be no need to give Anita Extreme Unction."

"She's wonderfully better," added the nurse. "The danger, for the present, is past."

"And to-morrow," said Mr. Reade. "I take Anita to Cincinnati."

Then Anita looked interested.

"Can Bob come?" she suddenly said.

Mr. Reade looked inquiringly at Bob, who nodded his head.

"Anita," said the father, "your mother must stay with the children. But Lucille and I will go, and Miss Trainer—" Here he paused.

"O," sighed Anita.

"And Bob!" he added.

Anita closed her eyes, and said chirpingly,

"Good night."

CHAPTER XVII

Showing that even a hospital may be a delightful place, and ending with a startling declaration from the mouth of Miss Trainer.

It was a beautiful morning in the first days of September. In a spacious and airy room of the New Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati, Anita, seated, or rather reclining in a Morris chair, was holding high court, surrounded by her willing slaves, Bob, Lucille, Mr. Reade, and, now fully as devoted as any of them, Miss Trainer.

Six days have passed since we left them, Anita is convalescent; the glow has returned to her cheek, gladness to her eye, and radiant animation to her sweet features.

She has been from her arrival the unspoiled pet of the Hospital. Internes, nurses, and gentle Sisters have vied with one another in showing her every possible attention. The little child has received all these manifestations of love with easy grace. But she has been boisterously delighted with the way in which Bob has won the affections of all.

Dr. Benson, the specialist in child's dis-

cases, has pronounced Bob the most perfect physical specimen of a boy he has ever met; he has also been pleased to add that as a nurse, Bob is in a class by himself. Indeed, the good doctor has more than once expressed the opinion that Bob, and not himself, had effected the little one's cure; an opinion in which he has been strongly backed by Anita herself.

Bob has won the heart of every sick child in the splendid hospital. Among them his popularity has become so great that Anita has had to struggle continuously against her feelings of jealousy.

Most wonderful of all, Miss Trainer has completely changed her attitude towards our big-hearted hero and his friends. For the first time in her life, the nurse has been brought to see what big things are done by love and by that lofty self-sacrifice which is the daughter of love. Miss Trainer has been looking critically into her own life: and has recognized, for the first time, how empty and unlovely it has been. Love has at last entered into her heart, and she gives promise of being another woman for the rest of her days.

"Bob," said Anita, "I'm almost ready for my first Communion. Sister Clarence, after my lesson this morning, said I might make it next Sunday."

"And I'm going to serve the Mass that day," cried the boy joyfully. "I knew all my Mass-prayers, except one long one, before I left Matt. I've learned that now, and Sister Henrietta has only to show me a few little things I've got to do. I'm going to decorate the altar: Sister Henrietta says I may. All the flowers will be white: and the priest will wear white vestments; and I'm getting up a choir from the nurses, and we'll have the prettiest celebration ever held in this Hospital."

"Anita and Bob," said Lucille, "I envy you two."

"Why, Lucille?" asked the boy.

"Because you belong to the Church I have loved since my first days at St. Mary's Convent."

"If I were in your place," said Bob sympathetically, "I'd feel that way myself."

"Lucille," said Mr. Reade, laying his hand on Anita's hair and stroking it fondly, "I have something to tell you, which has an important bearing upon what you have just said. When we reached this hospital a few days ago, Sister Henrietta led me into the chapel. I was very despondent. The relapse which had come upon Anita on the train worried me more than I allowed myself to show; and the fear had come back to me that I was to lose my dearest

little girl. I really believe that Sister Henrietta read my thoughts. She's a wonderful woman, holy, gentle and tactful. When we came before a statue of the Virgin Mary, she touched my arm lightly and whispered: 'Tell her, tell the mother of mothers, about your little Anita.' Before I knew it, I was kneeling before the statue and begging for Anita's life. Now comes the strange part. I said half aloud, 'O Mother Mary, if you spare my little darling, you may have Tom and Lucille.' "

"What did you mean, father?" asked Lucille.

"That's what I've often asked myself since. It was a strange thing for a lawyer to do—to make a promise first and afterwards to ask himself what he meant by it. But that is precisely what I did. After thinking it over, I have come to the conclusion that what I really meant was that you, Lucille, and Tom are free to join, as both of you have so often asked me, the Catholic Church."

Bob jumped into the air, knocking his heels together three distinct times—Bob, who had been the fat boy, now down to one hundred and fifty-five pounds, and as light upon his feet as any athlete. Lucille, with a cry of joy, threw her arms about her father, who, in turn, caught Anita up and hugged her warmly.

"Why," cried Lucille, flushing into new beauty, "I may be baptized next Saturday and go to Communion with Anita!"

"Glory, glory, halleluiah," broke in Miss Trainer, adding in softened undertones,

" 'Yes, we shall gather by the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful bright river,
Yes, we shall gather by the river,
By the river's shining shore.' "

Miss Trainer was getting religion.

"O Lucille," piped Anita, "hug me, hug me, or I shall blow up."

An interruption brought this happy group to earth again. Just as Miss Trainer was breaking into "Onward, Christian Soldiers" in a voice that had seen better days, Sister Henrietta entered the room.

"Good morning," she said brightly. "What business have you in a hospital, Anita? If you're sick, the whole world is in a dying condition. Here, Bob, are some letters for you."

While Sister Henrietta and the others fell into a cheery conversation, Bob ran through his mail.

"O listen," he said presently. "Here's a letter from Mrs. Mose. Do you want to hear it?"

There was enthusiastic and unanimous assent.

My dear Bob:

Your big package of tobacco and the two pipes came to us with your sweet letter. I'm sorry that your friend Matt Morris didn't keep that murderer of Hobo in the water till he was drownded; and Mose, who is deafer than ever, joins me in my sorrow. Mose wants me to tell you that he goes to Mass every Sunday, and has made his first confession and Communion. Mose was always good; but he is now better than ever, never curses when he thinks of it, and, if he weren't so darned deaf, would be just perfect. His rheumatism bothers him when he hasn't any thing else to worry about. We talk of you every day, and we hope every day that you'll come and see us again; and stay as long as you like, and the longer you like to stay, the more we'll like it. The tobacco is fine, and the pipes are so pretty that we hate to spoil them by smoking in them. So we have hung them over our bed, and every time we look at them we think of

Yours truly,

ANNA AND MOSE.

P. S. Mose made me read him this letter twice. He wanted me to read it a third time;

but I told him I couldn't shout all day. He wanted me to remind you that he can neither read nor write, and that in his day he was the strongest man from Dubuque to Davenport; and he says that there's something wrong about the ending of this letter; but I can't make out what he means.

ANNA.

"We'll have to visit Mose some day," said Mr. Reade.

"I love him," said Anita. "He is Bob's friend."

"O goodness!" Bob suddenly exclaimed, "just look at this!" And Bob held up a money order.

"What! More money, Bob?" exclaimed Mr. Reade.

"It's for fifty dollars," Bob continued. "Now I have money enough to carry me through another year of school."

"Did Mose send it?" asked Miss Trainer innocently.

"I rather think," said Mr. Reade, "that if Mose had fifty dollars in possession at one time, he would die of heart disease. More likely it has come from John Symmes, the landlord of the Blue Bird Inn, or his wife."

"No," said Bob. "But listen, and you shall hear. It's from Tom Temple."

"The tramp? My goodness!" said Lucille.

"Here's what he writes:

"Dear Bob:

"My ships are beginning to come in. In the last three weeks, six of my poems have been accepted. There are four more out, and all of them were written while you and I were partners. From the time I met you, till, under the saddest circumstances, we parted, I was in a lyric mood. You brought poetry and love into my life: and I translated them into verse. One hundred dollars have been paid me for those six poems, and as we were partners when I wrote them, you supplying the capital and the élan, you are entitled to half the profits; and now that I have discharged this debt, my spirits are rising, I am in lyric mood again, and I am going to devote one week to verse: then, ho! for the open road. I purpose seeking The Blue Bird Inn,—that inn where the Blue Bird really does mean happiness,—and I intend also, armed with your introduction, to visit that family of nightingales, the Reades."

"What does he mean?" broke in Lucille, her eyes shining and her cheeks aflush.

"I reckon," explained Bob, "that he gives

you that name because I said the children all had such pretty voices, and never spoke roughly, but always gently; and that in doing this they were trying to be as nice as Lucille and their father and mother."

"Thank you, Bob," said Lucille, bowing low. "But pardon the interruption. I like that Tom Temple. Go on, please."

"If," Bob read on, "Miss Lucille is as gracious and queenly and as beau—"

"Skip that, skip that," implored the fair subject of these encomiums, flushing more deeply than ever.

"Well-er-hum—O, here it is," continued Bob.

"I'm no longer, dear Bob, on the road that leads nowhere. I've ordered my road, and I'm going, God helping me, to follow it. It's a road which is hedged in by discipline and self-restraint, and it is loveliest in this that it leads to home and to mother and to the smile of those angel faces that I have loved long since but lost awhile."

"He is quoting Newman's Lead, Kindly Light," Lucille interrupted. "I like any one who likes that poem. I've used it as a prayer whenever I'm in trouble. But go on, Bob."

"God bless you, Bob. If I could get some of your love into my poetry, my stuff would be worth reading. Pray for

"Your unworthy friend,

"TOM TEMPLE."

"I'll pray for Tom Temple every day," said Anita.

"I should be pleased," observed Miss Trainer, "to nurse Mr. Tom Temple through typhoid fever or—or—yes, even through a bad case of small-pox."

CHAPTER XVIII

In which Bob discovers why he came to Cincinnati and enters upon a new and ordered life.

"MR. READE," said Bob, when the group had begun to recover from the effects of Miss Trainer's rather startling statement, "have you a good cigar about you?"

"Why—eh—yes," answered the puzzled lawyer. "But you haven't taken to smoking, Bob, have you?"

"O, no, sir; that's not the thing for a growing boy. But there's an awful nice man on this floor that I want to visit. He's stocky and has the most likeable face. I've passed his room several times, and he's always smiling. I noticed that a lot of nice boys have been calling on him, and they bring him flowers and fruit, and they talk and laugh when they're with him. He must be a mighty nice man, or those boys wouldn't be coming from all over town to see him."

Mr. Reade drew from his coat pocket a cigar-case.

"There!" he said. "It's full: and I want

you, Bob, to hold up the honor of Iowa. One cigar! Give him the whole case."

"Thank you, sir. You always do more than I ask."

"Come in," said a cheery voice, as Bob knocked at D 18.

Bob entered.

Lying upon the bed, dressed in a lounging robe, was the stocky man, whom Bob had so favorably considered. He was on the sunny side of middle life, with a square head, and dark hair kept from curling by being cut rather short. Beside him sat a boy of thirteen, neat in dress, bright and alert in expression. On Bob's entrance, the young visitor rose.

"Good morning, sir," said Bob with his very best smile. "I've passed here several times, and I noticed that you smoke. Would you mind trying these?"

Instead of taking the case of cigars, the invalid caught Bob's arm and gazed closely upon his features. It was a friendly gaze, not at all embarrassing.

"Say, when you grow up, the world is going to lose a great Center Rush."

Bob chuckled.

"I never played football in my life," he said.

"But it's not too late. You will. I'm sim-

ply delighted that you've come in to see me, and I'm glad to have these cigars. And your name is—?"

"Bob Ryan, sir."

"It's as good a name as Kelly or Burke or Shea," said the man, shaking Bob's hand heartily. "Bob Ryan, I want to introduce you to my best scholar, Joe Kelly."

"Glad to meet you, Bob," said the smiling Joe. "Gee! how I wish you had been in our class."

"Thank you, Joe. You—you don't mean to say that you're a teacher!" gasped Bob, turning to the invalid.

"That's the one thing I'm living for," answered the healthy invalid, taking a cigar from the case while Joe Kelly produced and lighted a match.

"He's the teacher of our eighth grade," said Joe proudly, "and it's the best eighth grade in the city."

"Joe," said the man laughing, "you're prejudiced."

"No, I'm not: it is the best."

"The eighth grade," gasped Bob, changing color.

"You seem to be very much interested," said the teacher, taking a few grateful puffs.

"I should say I am. Why, the one thing

I've been working for and dreaming of all this summer is to make my eighth grade. Only—" Here Bob paused and blushed. "I want to make it in a Catholic school."

Joe Kelly and his teacher broke into a laugh.

"Why, Bob," explained Joe. "Our teacher is a Brother of Mary, Brother Cyril, and our school is St. Xavier's."

"Excuse me," said Bob, and sat down.

"Are you feeling sick?" asked Brother Cyril anxiously.

"No," said Bob. "I'm—I'm startled. Brother Cyril, I am awfully glad to meet you. May I come back to see you? I want to go off and think. There are a lot of things buzzing in my mind now: I'm just all upset. May I come back? I want to have a talk with you."

"Indeed, I want you to come back. Let's see: it's Thursday: suppose you come on Sunday afternoon. I want you to meet Father Carney and Brother Winifrid, my superior. They will both be here then."

"Thank you, Brother: and I'm awfully glad to meet you, Joe: and I hope we'll meet often again."

And Bob, bewildered and dazed, went to the chapel, remaining there for full half an hour.

The New Good Samaritan Hospital never

had a more devout first communicant than little Anita, a more fervent convert than lovely Lucille; a better server than Bob; a more devout choir than the sympathetic nurses and gentle nuns. Miss Trainer attended the services: she was so carried away that two tears of enthusiasm trickled down her face, the first tears, positively, ever shed by her for anybody except herself. Miss Trainer was beginning to be liked: and she, in turn, was learning that a little love for others goes a great way in this not altogether unpleasant world.

At breakfast, held in honor of Lucille and Anita, in a special room, Miss Trainer, blushing, and looking for the nonce quite young, presented Anita with a locket, and Lucille with one of Father Lasance's prayer-books. She had bought them with her own money.

Anita hugged her; and once more the unselfish tear came to the woman's eye. For nearly two weeks, she had been an unconscious pupil in the school of kindness, one of the most catching and communicable things in the world.

"I want to announce," said Mr. Reade, "that we start for Davenport next Tuesday: and I'm sure," he added, "that much as we love our new friends here, we'll all be glad to go."

The rejoicing was not general. Bob looked troubled. Sinking his chin upon his fist, and

supporting the elbow with his free hand, he looked into space.

"What's the matter, Bob?" asked Mr. Reade kindly.

"I don't know what to say, sir. I—I'm not sure that I'm going!"

"What!" was the general cry.

"If I don't," went on Bob, "if I have to leave you and Anita and Lucille and Miss Trainer, it will be—it will be—medicine."

"Ugh!" shuddered Anita, the memory of many a late potion still vivid.

"But," Bob continued, "I think I'll know by this evening."

When Bob entered Brother Cyril's room that afternoon, he was received with open arms. Brother Winifrid, the superior, a pleasant man of fresh, rosy complexion, and winning manners, and Father Carney, in charge of St. Xavier's school, won his heart on sight.

"Aren't you rather old for the eighth grade?" asked Brother Winifrid.

"I'm not quite fourteen, Brother."

Father Carney and the head brother exchanged glances of surprise.

"You look sixteen," said Father Carney. "If Jack the Giant Killer were around, he'd try to slay you out of hand."

"No wonder," put in Brother Cyril, "that

Doctor Benson classes him as a perfectly normal and healthy boy—the most perfect he has ever seen."

"But you ought to have seen me two months ago," said Bob apologetically. "I'd have been a candidate for a fat man's race. In that time I've taken off at least thirty pounds."

"You must have had some adventures, I fancy," said Father Carney.

"I should say I had—lots of them."

"And would you mind telling us your story, Bob?" asked Brother Cyril. "And while you're doing it, we'll each smoke one of your very excellent cigars."

For the first time Bob told his adventures without suppression. He felt that having followed to the letter and in the spirit his father's injunctions, he was now free to keep nothing back. He had a most attentive audience.

"Who says that romance is dead?" cried Father Carney when Bob had come to an end.

"It sounds like a fairy tale," said Brother Winifrid.

"But the funny part," added Bob, "is that when I was talking with Brother Cyril here the other day and I found out that he was a Brother of Mary and teacher of the eighth grade, it struck me all of a heap that without thinking of it, I had come south and met my

teacher and found my school; and that also meant that I was to give up Anita, Lucille and all the Reades, the nicest family I ever met."

"Oh," said Brother Cyril. "Now I understand why you suddenly sat down and got so confused."

"Just a moment before I met you, Brother," Bob went on, "I received a check for fifty dollars from Tom Temple earned by him during our partnership, and I said, 'That gives me enough money to pay my way during my eighth grade.' And even then it didn't dawn on me that I ought to stay in Cincinnati."

"We'll be delighted to have you at our school," said Father Carney. "Here," he added, taking out a slip of paper, and writing a few lines, "are the name and address of a good woman on Pioneer Street, who will furnish you with board and lodging, probably at five dollars a week. I can assure you an excellent room and a good table."

"I think I can almost afford five dollars, Father, and will it be near the church?"

"Three minutes of slow walking—the way I walk when I have a bill to pay—will bring you to St. Xavier's."

"And I can serve early Mass?"

"Certainly—at half-past five o'clock, if you wish."

"And now, Bob," said Brother Cyril, "suppose you come over beside me. I want to find out how you stand in the various branches."

While Bob and Brother Cyril entered into close conference, Father Carney and the head brother discussed from various angles the boy's unusual story.

"Did you notice," commented Brother Winifrid, "how lucky Bob has been?"

"No; I can't say I did," answered Father Carney.

"Take for instance his meeting Tom Temple just when he needed a friend."

"Yes; but it was Temple who was lucky. It was Temple who needed the friend. And besides, Bob had to give him up."

"Well, then," pursued the brother, "take his meeting with good old Mose. That was lucky."

"Luck for Mose—yes. He's saved that old fellow's soul and made him and his wife very happy."

"What about the boat then, Father Carney? He made $110.00 on the deal."

"He bought in the lowest and sold in the highest market. That's business," returned the priest with a grin.

"Well—of course, you won't give in, and I know you love to argue for the sake of argu-

ment—but what about the way he got into the good graces of the Blue Bird Inn people, Mr. and Mrs. Symmes?"

"That wasn't luck; it was politeness. Don't you teach your boys that it pays to be polite?"

"And just think, Father Carney, of his running in with Matt Morris. There's luck for you."

"It was Opportunity knocking at Bob's door, and lucky Bob opened and welcomed his guest."

"I suppose," said Brother Winifrid, throwing up his hands in mock despair, "that you'd say there was no luck about his finding his way into the heart of Anita and Lucille, and the entire Reade family."

"I certainly would," said Father Carney stoutly. "Bob Ryan simply got what he gave. And that's what happens to most of us in this world. If we're small, we get small returns; if we're big, we land whales."

"What do you call luck, then, Father Carney?"

"Finding a pearl in an oyster."

"I just said Bob was lucky in order to start you, Father; for I know pretty well your sentiments on that subject."

"Oh, you did. Wanted to get me excited, eh? Well, you did take a rise out of me. But,

to be serious about the matter, did you notice that Bob always enlarged upon the bright side of telling his story. He spoke of the kindnesses he received; of the friends he made; but he said hardly one word of his hardships."

"Hardships!" exclaimed Brother Winifrid. "What do you mean? He had none." As the head of the boys' department uttered these words, there was a twinkle in his eye, which escaped Father Carney.

"Oh, no; according to your ideas, a hardship would mean losing a leg or a meal or a tooth or a suspender button. It seems to me," continued Father Carney with renewed earnestness, "that if I had met Bob Ryan three months ago, I would have been extremely puzzled."

"As to what, Father?"

"As to how he would grow up. There he was, a superman in good nature, overflowing with love, and living in a town where blind cats used to devour him with eyes of affection, and lame dogs delighted to frisk about him, and children, as though he were Castoria, used to cry for him. Everybody loved him; he loved everybody. But how was it all to end?"

"What's the answer, Father?"

"There's the trouble: I don't know the answer. Love was the keynote of his life—but undisciplined love. Of course, we all know

that love, properly understood, is the greatest thing in the world; but we also ought to know that love may have the defect of its qualities. The affections have played the very deuce in history. So, there was, I firmly believe, a danger lurking for Bob in the years to come. Then God stepped in (He loves that boy, I fancy, in quite an extraordinary way), and treated Bob as He treated Abraham. He sent him into exile, cutting him off from the blind cats who were to see Bob no more, from the lame dogs, stopping their frisking, from the children, from all his friends. I suppose, Brother Winifrid, you'll say that was no hardship?"

"A small one."

"It would be small for me," said Father Carney modestly; "but for Bob, who loved much, it was terrible. The author of the Imitation says, 'There is no life of love without pain.' Because he loved, Bob suffered."

"That father of his was an unfeeling brute," said Brother Winifrid.

"Not at all; I think he must be a very nice man, indeed!"

"What!" exclaimed the brother, getting excited himself, "after throwing him defenseless upon the world!"

"Oh, he wasn't cruel at all."

"Oh, look here, Father Carney—"

"I repeat," interrupted the priest, "that his father is a splendid man, and that you are doing him a grave injustice."

"What do you mean, Father Carney?"

"That," said the priest, "is a question the answer to which, as they say now-a-days, since faith has gone out of fashion, is in the lap of the gods. May we get the answer some day."

Father Carney paused a moment.

"But to return to our point. Don't you see that this boy has gone through a process of renunciation which has torn his very heart strings? He lost Tom Temple; lost Mose and his wife; lost the couple conducting the Blue Bird Inn, lost his boat, his dog, Matt Morris. And now with a wrench which Brother Cyril just glimpsed on Bob's first visit, he gives up the Reades. All the same, he has through these very hardships undergone a training of heart which, I hope, will stand him in good stead for life. The smile of God is upon him; but Bob has suffered keenly, and his suffering will, I hope, prove to be his greatest blessing."

"Father," said the brother, "I believe you are right—and I perceive that Brother Cyril has put the boy through his paces."

"I've passed," cried Bob triumphantly, smil-

ing upon his two critics, who had, it need scarcely be said, discussed his story and himself in lowered tones.

"He has," said Brother Cyril; "and passed very well, too. In literature, he is unusually excellent; in grammar, good; as to arithmetic, I'm sure, with a little help, he'll get through."

"Father Carney, if you don't mind, I'll go and tell Mr. Reade that I intend remaining. It will be pretty hard. Anita will make an awful row. Why are we always bidding our friends good-by in this world anyhow?"

"Just to let us know, Bob," said Father Carney, "that we are in a place of exile, in a place which, if there were no separation, we might love too well. By renunciation, my boy, by such renunciation as you have made, and are making, in giving up the Reades, you are learning the great lesson of loving wisely."

Bob was quite right in his conjecture as to the way Anita would take the news. For a time, she would not be consoled. Then her father took her aside, and whispered into her ear a most solemn secret, which he commissioned her to impart to Lucille, who hearing it dropped her grief like a mantle. Miss Trainer, too, became a party to it.

Whenever Bob entered the room, he noticed that the four, in earnest converse, would break

off awkwardly, look mysterious, and show in various ways that he was the subject of their discussions.

"I guess," thought Bob, "that they are thinking up some scheme to get me back. But they'll not succeed."

On Monday morning, Mr. Reade announced that he was going to the city to make arrangements for their departure.

"Pa, mayn't I go with you?" said Anita, addressing her father, but eyeing Bob. "I haven't been out since we came to the hospital."

"And I," said Lucille, "want to do a little shopping."

"If Anita goes," put in Miss Trainer, "I feel it my duty to be with her."

"We'll all go," said Bob.

Anita looked embarrassed.

"I think," said Mr. Reade, "that Brother Cyril, who after three weeks of rest cure is quite himself, wants to have a little talk with you before he leaves. You know, he goes to-day."

"And," added Anita, "the little boy with the broken leg wants to know when you're coming to the ward to play with him. I promised him you'd be around this morning."

"There's a new patient, a boy of your age, just arrived an hour ago," added the nurse,

"and he has heard about you, and has asked to see you."

"And besides, Bob," Lucille said, "as I won't be here, and can't visit my sick friends, I want you to take my place."

Clearly Bob was not wanted.

The party, accordingly, went off without him, and returned in the afternoon. On Tuesday, the day of their departure, the day, also, of the opening of school, they went shopping again. In the meantime, Anita grew more mysterious, and the conspiracy seemed to grow deeper. Bob did not present himself at St. Xavier School on the opening day: he wanted to give it entire to his dear friends.

Anita broke down once more at the hour of parting. Bob gave her a box of candy, and she still wept. Then the boy said he would write her every week, and the tears in her eyes became irresolute. To clinch matters, he solemnly averred that he would think of her every day, whereupon there occurred, upon Anita's face, a terrific collision between smiles and tears.

The train moved out; and once more the oppressive feeling came upon Bob that he was alone.

"Halloa, Bob," said a cheery voice; "we've been waiting for you."

It was Brother Cyril who spoke. With him was Brother Winifrid.

"Why, how's this?" cried the boy. "I didn't expect to meet you here."

"You didn't? There are always surprises in this world," said his new teacher. "Where did you propose to go now?"

"To Pioneer Street. I've got the address in my pocket."

"Well," said Brother Winifrid, "we've come down to see you safe there. We have interviewed the lady of the house, and she has agreed to take you for $3.50 a week."

"I thought it would be five."

"The price she makes you is special; and you're not to talk about it."

Brother Cyril did not feel free to state that Mr. Reade was secretly to make up the difference.

"That means," said Bob, "that I'll have pocket money, and won't have to worry at all."

On their walk through the heart of the city, Brother Cyril kept Bob busy puzzling out conundrums, in such wise that the boy forgot his loss of friends and laughed and chattered as though he never had a care.

In due course they reached Bob's future home on Pioneer Street, and, warmly wel-

comed by the kind woman of the house, were led upstairs to the second floor front.

When they entered, Bob gave a gasp of delight. It was a large airy room, with windows opening south and west. It was, in fact, a very big room for a small boy. But it was not the size of the apartment which elicited Bob's gasp of delight. The room was in fittings and appointments a thing of beauty. Everything was spick and span and new. There was a brass bed shining in the electric light. There was a dresser made to delight the heart of a boy. There was a trunk with "B. R." stamped upon its side; there was a handbag. Flowers were on the mantel, flowers on a dainty table; flowers over an artistic bookcase. About the mantel hung a pair of swords and of boxing gloves; beneath these, dumbbells and Indian clubs. On the walls were fine copies of masterpieces, and, over the bed a beautiful photograph of little Anita.

"By George!" cried the boy, and he gasped again.

"Look," said Brother Winifrid, throwing open the trunk.

Bob did so. There were clothes of all descriptions.

"What does it mean?" said the boy, running

through the contents. "There's enough there to last me the whole year."

"Read the card tagged on," suggested Brother Winifrid.

Bob read: "To Bob Ryan in gratitude from John S. Reade."

"Look," said Brother Cyril, standing at the book-case.

"Why there's all of Dickens, and a lot of nice books I've just heard of," said Bob.

"Notice the bottom shelf; all the text-books for the 8th grade. Here's the tag for this."

"To Bob from Lucille," Bob read aloud.

"Well, I'll be switched," he added.

"Look," said the lady of the house, pointing to a mahogany roll-top desk.

"My!" exclaimed Bob, throwing up the cover.

There was an open note on the desk.

Dear Bob:

This is your desk to write me a letter every week. Look x x x x x x one thousand of them.

Your loving,

Anita.

It was full half an hour before Bob had done with admiring the perfect appointments of his new home. He considered it, after the inspection, a sort of indoor Fairyland.

"To-morrow, Bob," said Brother Cyril, "I expect you in our class. We have thirty-four boys already, and they are just the kind I want."

"I'll be there," said Bob gaily; "and I'm going to work; and to try to forget for a while the one thing that troubles me."

"And what's that?"

"My father's sending me off in that strange way. There's something behind it; at least I feel that way."

"Pray daily, and put it all in the hands of our Blessed Lady," said Brother Winifrid.

"Throw your trouble upon the Lord," added Brother Cyril, "and He will take care of you. He has done it all these weeks you have wandered. Trust Him for this, too."

How far right Brother Cyril was will be shown in a future account of Bob's adventures.

"Well, Bob," said the head brother, taking the boy's hand, "it's getting late. So good night, and pleasant dreams."

"Good night, Bob," added Brother Cyril. "You're starting out with two friends, and to-morrow you'll have a classroom full. I really hate to leave this beautiful room with its fittings and flowers. What do you think of it, Bob?"

Bob paused, placed one hand under his chin,

supporting its elbow with the other, and said:

"It's—it's Love!"

Then they left him; and Bob, taking one more eager look about the room, knelt at the prie-dieu and picked up the beautiful crucifix —Miss Trainer's gift—and gazing upon the thorn-crowned figure cried out once more:

"It's Love; it's Love!"

THE END.

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